ORLANDO.

BY

CLEMENTINA BLACK.

Fitz Herbert Wright.

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CLEMENTINA BLACK,

AUTHOR OF "A SUSSEX IDYL," ETC.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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ORLANDO.

CHAPTER I.

IN PICCADILLY.

"ACT I., SCENE I.—A street. Enter two gentlemen."

THE wisdom of our ancestors has rendered familiar to us all the time-honoured stage-direction that stands at the head of this chapter. Reading it, we foresee at once the introductory scene to follow, in which, under colour of discussing the future, a first and a second gentleman will artfully reveal to us the past. Once more must this well-worn prelude be sounded; but the externals of scenery, actors and costumes, must be filled in in words.

The street, then, was Piccadilly; the time, afternoon; and the season, that in which the most ardent lovers of London begin to dream of green lawns and breezy moors. The first and second gentlemen, entering from Bond Street and from St. James's Street respectively, met in the fuller stream that runs between those two affluents. The younger seemed to be about twenty-two or twenty-three years old, was well-grown, well-looking, and well-dressed, a favourite, apparently, both with nature and with fortune.

The other was not to be described in so few words. A first glance proclaimed him accustomed to good society; one who was used to wear his clothes and regulate his bearing according to the latest standard of fitness; a model after whom it would be safe to dress or speak. A second glance might gather, perhaps, some subtle indication, too fine to be rendered in words,

of military training; but, beyond that, no hint of tastes, disposition, or pursuits. His face was, as a witness of character, altogether impenetrable, conveying merely the slightly sinister impression which we are apt to receive from impenetrability. It could only be said of him, at a first meeting, that he looked like a gentleman: a convenient formula, into which the speaker can put whatever measure he pleases of the condemnation implied in faint praise.

The younger man's face, on the contrary, was of very unusual openness. Its lights and shadows were as changeable as those reflected by a river beneath a sunny, but cloud-flecked, sky. His name was on many people's lips, and generally in the simple form of Christian and surname—Lawrence O'Brien, with no formality of 'Mr.' Everybody liked him; a sociable and confiding temper, an inclination to universal friendli-

ness, and a worldly position that quieted every apprehension of his ever wanting to borrow money, had produced their natural effect, and perhaps no man in London had more and pleasanter acquaintances, or fewer intimate friends. Just now, as he came down Bond Street, the face which everybody liked was overcast. The sight of a friend was, however, always enough to restore its brightness, and the clouds gave way, as the two men met, to a particularly pleasant smile.

"Why, Grove," he said, "I thought you were out of town!"

His words had a lingering of the seductive, incurable Irish accent, and from his tone you might have supposed that his whole anxiety had been a desire for this meeting, which was not by any means the case.

"Going on Monday," Captain Grove replied. "I thought *you* would have been off before this."

"I'm for the north by to-night's mail, to Corriewhuillie—Sydenham's, you know. Going my way? I must just look in at Bailey's, about a gun of mine he has."

They turned into St. James's Street, and Captain Grove dropped a careless observation on its emptiness. His companion answered with an absent "Yes." A moment's pause followed; then, seeming to take a sudden resolution, O'Brien drew a long sigh, and said abruptly—

"I say, Grove—you know everything about everybody—do you think it is true that Miss Glendinning is to marry that fool of a cousin of hers?"

Captain Grove's feeling at this appeal would best have expressed itself in the words of Benedick, 'Sits the wind in that corner?' but quotation was not a practice in which he excelled, and his personal feeling attained no clearer outward form than a subdued "Ah!"

Passing a thoughtful finger over his moustache, he answered, "I don't think it;—not that he is such a fool, either."

"Would you bet against it, then?"

"I don't bet on those things myself; there's never any knowing."

He spoke lightly, but with a watchful eye, suffering no fluctuation of his companion's face to escape him. Its expression, at present, was of a perplexed hesitation, that showed no immediate symptom of crystallizing into speech.

Captain Grove, therefore, continued, in an easy tone, "Where is Miss Glendinning now?"

"At their place, you know—the Oakeses', I mean—in Surrey. Willingshurst."

"But Oakes is not there. He's in Norway, or somewhere."

"Yes, I know. That's my only comfort. Of course there's somebody else, if he isn't there. There's always somebody."

Captain Grove ever so slightly shrugged his shoulders.

"What do you expect, if you will admire the beauty of the season?"

Again there was a little pause, until Lawrence broke forth vehemently—

"I don't think I can stand it much longer. I feel sometimes as if it would drive me mad. And then to be always hearing that she is going to marry this man or that man! What do *you* think, Grove? Do you think I have any chance? You always know."

Captain Grove was not in haste to reply; it does not behove knowledge to be too eager in unfolding its stores.

"I don't know that I do know much about Miss Glendinning," he said at last. "Speaking in a general way, I should say you have a better chance with any woman than nine men out of ten. I feel pretty sure of this about her: she is not the girl

to throw herself away. And I don't think she'll marry Oakes."

Lawrence appeared to take in and digest these propositions one by one.

"And you are going to-night?" Captain Grove asked, dropping back into the most ordinary tone of everyday talk.

"Yes, to-night. I tried to speak to her one day at the Leeds'; but she looked so unconscious and so self-possessed that I had not courage. I don't believe she has the least idea of what I feel for her."

"Ah-h?" said Captain Grove. The tone of interrogation seemed addressed rather to himself than to his companion. His voice, as he proceeded, had a slight difference of pitch. "She ought to be well up to the signs by this time, one would suppose. Perhaps she understands more than you give her credit for."

"Do you think so?"

"Who can tell—until you ask her? If

you wanted my advice" ("I do," interjected Lawrence), "I should say, see for yourself at the earliest opportunity."

They were in Pall Mall now, and at this juncture stood still outside the lodgings of that Captain Bailey who had O'Brien's gun.

Captain Grove had glanced down reflectively at the pavement; he now looked up with a curious smile, and said, "Well, good-bye. I shall look to have to congratulate you by the time we meet again."

"I hope so, I am sure," said Lawrence, giving as profound a sigh as that with which he had begun his confidences. And with a hearty grasp of the hand, and a return of his peculiarly bright smile, he nodded and went into the house.

Captain Grove turned back up St. James's Street, and his thoughts, as he walked, were rather vindictive. Lawrence O'Brien marry Elizabeth Glendinning!

Never! Of all preposterous and displeasing ideas, this was the most displeasing which had ever been presented to him. And what a fool the man must be to talk of it to *him!* Or no; probably it was his own astuteness which rendered such confidences possible. It was well in any case that they had been made. And now, when O'Brien came back from Scotland, he would go to her with his proposal, and of course she would accept him. "Not if I know it," said Captain Grove to himself; and as he said them, the somewhat indefinite words held as fierce an intention of having his own way as the orthodox second gentleman of tragedy could have expressed in blank verse. It would be strange indeed if he were less than a match for Lawrence O'Brien.

Willingshurst, in Surrey. Willingshurst, by Willingham, surely he remembered. Willingham would be the station. Let him get a railway guide.

And the next morning, when O'Brien, wrapped in a thick coat, was being driven, cold and weary, across a stretch of high moors to Corriewhuillie, Captain Grove sat leaning back in a blue railway-carriage, between flying lines of field and lawn and white-faced villas. In the minds of both hung the vision of Miss Glendinning, who, for her part, was strolling between her uncle's garden-borders, gathering the late roses, without any thought of either of them.

CHAPTER II.

IN SHRUBB'S WOOD.

"True Thomas lay on Huntly bank,
A ferlie spied he wi' his ee;
There he saw a lady bright
Come riding down by the Eildon tree.

. . . . . .

'Now maun ye go wi' me,' she said—
'Now, Thomas, ye maun go wi' me;
And ye maun serve me seven years,
Through weal or woe, as may chance to be.'"

Thomas the Rhymer.

ORLANDO SHERBORNE, to whom is destined the first tenor's part in this tale, lay outstretched beneath a clump of trees, looking up through their foliage to the sky. The birds sang above him in the summer air, and a rippling dance-melody ran in the background of his memory and set his

thoughts to measure. His thoughts were of the kind to which some such accompaniment, pleasant, but not too pronounced, makes a fitting framework, as the grass and copse made a fitting framework for the young figure stretched out in happy indolence. He was one and twenty, and this was the last month of the long vacation in his third year at college. Beside him lay an open book, upon whose face his one hand rested, and on his lips sat the peculiar smile of youth, neither wholly wistful nor triumphant, but touching the edge of both moods—the smile of possibility which haunts true mediæval art sometimes and modern mediæval art always. The book was the Odyssey, in an Oxford Pocket Classic edition. It bore Orlando's name on its first page; its corners were worn to roundness, and it was marked in sundry places with ink-spots and marginal notes. For a time its charm

had kept his thoughts sailing with Ulysses on the unknown seas. But, after a time, the young present asserted its superiority to the far-distant past. The unknown seas of Homer gave way to the unknown expanses of an individual life; the name within the book became more potent than the title on its back, and the figure whom his dreamy musings encircled was called no longer Odysseus, but Orlando. The visions of craft, force, and struggle yielded place to those of peace and order, and 'a life that leads melodious days.' His were those visions of every man's youth, in which he sees himself walking the world like a king. The accompanying homage, however, which fills so large a place in the dreams of so many of us, held, in Orlando's, none at all. His ideal complete self had no attribute of a knight-errant, riding brilliant through the world, deserving and winning applause. His

aspiration was rather to *be* noble than to do great deeds. He would be content in all simplicity with doing his duty in that state of life to which it should please God to call him. And if that state should be one involving martyrdom, he was of a nature to go to his martyrdom quietly, serene within himself, and untroubled by considerations of praise, blame, or oblivion.

As some men train their bodies, and some develop their minds, so it was Orlando's desire to cultivate his soul. Born to a place whose duties he was fitted to perform, he would work out his life into one serene, full whole, careless of fame, content with the love (which could not fail to follow such a life) of a few. Circumstance and nature had done much for him; it behoved him to see that he did not waste their gifts. To a fine nature good fortune, like noble birth, brings obligations. Those

lines, which lend themselves so readily to mockery—

> 'Not more than others I deserve,
> But God has given me more'—

may be taken nobly as well as meanly; and so taken, they formed the ground-bass to that harmonious fugue into which Orlando's day-dreams grew. Distinction was not for him; to take his degree with ordinary success was the outside limit of his hopes. He had long since confessed that to himself frankly, although by no means without regret. Even now, as his thoughts turned that way, a shadow fell upon his face; but it was as fleeting as a bird's passage across a clear sky, and was followed by a keener smile as his reflections dropped into another channel. Was not love, after all, better than distinction? A vision floated before him of the perfectly good, true, and beautiful woman whose love should be the com-

pletion of his life. He surrounded her with a halo of all imaginary perfections; yet her idea remained but vague, ready to be fitted to whatever external shape fortune might decree. Indistinct as the image was, his thoughts dwelt long upon it. He closed his eyes against the outer world, that he might have it the nearer. Presently he laid a sunburnt hand across his eyelids, on which the dancing sunlight flickered. The other hand, lying on the book, relaxed: the pages fluttered slowly upward; the morning grew stiller and stiller towards the noon.

In the same copse Captain Grove was walking with a gracefully dressed and beautiful young woman.

"Quite a flying visit," she was saying.

"Yes; I must go back this afternoon. And—who knows?—I may very likely be abroad before you come back to town. My people have been wanting me to take

a very good Indian appointment, and, under certain circumstances, perhaps I might. If so, I should almost certainly be away from London when you come home."

"Oh, I hope not," said the lady, in a tone of friendly concern.

He had watched her narrowly. At these words he dropped his gaze, and answered slowly, "I am not sure that I do."

She lifted her eyes, and looked at him with a slight, perplexed raising of her delicate eyebrows. An incredulous smile held her lips in momentary pause, then passed into a little laugh as she said, lightly, "That is hardly a compliment, is it?"

"I did not mean it for a compliment. It is just the truth. It does make me unhappy, always. I come, longing to see your face again, and the moment I see it,

it fills me with pain, because it tells me so plainly that I am nothing to you."

She looked down and made no answer. Her colour had grown a little deeper, but, on the whole, her countenance expressed rather surprise than emotion. His face, too, changed a little, growing a trifle keener and more intent.

"And if it is so," he went on, "as you do not deny that it is, is it not better that I should see as little of you as may be? I know my own weakness; if I were where it was possible to come to you, I should come. And I have taken pride in being thought a reasonable man. I don't care to make a fool of myself in people's eyes, Miss Glendinning—and I should."

Miss Glendinning still looked before her in silence, and at last murmured, "It seems so strange to hear you talk like that."

Captain Grove was not the man to damage his cause by overhasty speaking;

he remained silent, looking at her, and the silent gaze presently forced her to speak again.

Turning her face towards him with a kind of defiance, "How could I suppose," she asked, "that I was anything to you?"

"Surely, surely, you must have known that, always."

She kept her eyes fixed earnestly upon his face, as if seeking there some deeper tone of truth than sounded in his words. Her beauty was very great, but hardly more awake to love than that of Pygmalion's statue in its first completion.

"No," she said, quite quietly.

She had not at all calculated her manner. Neither her speech nor her silence had been dictated by the desire to lead him on, but if she had had such a desire, she could have adopted no course of conduct more likely to succeed.

"You are everything to me—everything,"

he returned, in a tone which was either of genuine passion or of something so nearly like it that he himself believed it genuine. "Am I blind, that I should overlook you? There is no woman like you in London—no, not in England. I never thought of marrying—I'm not a marrying man—but if you would marry me, I would give half my life to win you."

"But *you?*" said the girl, with a return to the lowered shyness of her former speech. "Somehow, I never thought——"

"There was no need to tell it to all London, was there?" said Captain Grove, almost fiercely.

Throughout the scene the note of tenderness had been strangely wanting from his speech. Probably she felt the want; she looked at him with a new trouble dawning through the calmness of her face, and asked slowly, with appealing eyes, "Do you really love me?"

He snatched her hand and laid it against his cheek. "Love you! Oh, Elizabeth, don't torture me."

She doubted no longer; she began to tremble; for a moment she seemed in terror.

He, seeing the change, said hurriedly, "Don't answer now. Let me come again—in a week."

"No, wait a moment," she answered.

She walked a few steps forward, and stood with her back towards him, her hands clasped and her eyes looking fixedly before her. She stood so, perhaps, a minute, which to him, as he waited, seemed immeasurable. How should she answer? she asked herself. The question had come upon her altogether unexpectedly, like thunder from a clear sky. It was an honour, there could be no doubt of that—a triumph. What a surprised shock would A., B., and C. receive, if they could know

that Captain Grove had asked her to marry him! And he did love her. That was so strange, so impossible to realize. She had never dreamed of this. Captain Grove was in a measure the acknowledged autocrat of the circle which made Elizabeth Glendinning's world; she had no more thought of him as a possible husband than if he had been a king, indeed. Certainly there was no one else whose wooing could so uplift her in her own eyes -yes, and in the eyes of others, too. Should she say 'yes' to him? She would never find any other man whom she would be so proud to marry. And she began to see that she might be a fitting wife to him. No, it was, after all, not so strange that he should love her. The pained, frightened look passed into a triumphant smile. She turned and saw him standing waiting for her. She measured him with her eyes as she came slowly towards him. He was

not the handsomest man whom she knew, but his appearance had, she thought, a character of unexceptionability to which more of absolute good looks would have been rather an injury than an assistance. He advanced a step towards her and left his face to ask his question. She met him with a clear gaze, in which something of the elation still lingered, and giving him her hand, said simply, "If you think I can make you happy, I will try."

Her lover received this answer with no enthusiastic demonstration of his gladness. He found himself overcome, to his own surprise, by an emotion of reverent, almost remorseful tenderness.

"And is your happiness," he asked, gently, "to count for nothing?"

She, still looking up at him with clear, serious eyes, answered, "I trust that to you."

"You safely may; you never shall repent

it," he fervently returned. His fervour was an astonishment to himself, and brought with it a pleasant sense of his own earnestness and devotion.

Elizabeth heard him with a faint smile, and said—

> "'Bin doch ein arm' unwissend Kind,
> Begreife nicht was er an mir find't.'"

Her tone was one in which many shades of feeling melted together, as the notes mingle in a full chord.

Captain Grove had an impression of having heard the words before, and wished that he could recollect the character of the context in which they appeared. He had an uncomfortable idea that her humility was but half sincere, and fancied he discerned in it a tone of mischief which he scarcely knew how to meet. His pleasant momentary thrill of self-forgetfulness withered at once, and left him once more governed chiefly by the desire to say the

most fitting thing. He said, therefore, with a careful gentleness, "Your looking-glass might tell you."

And Elizabeth, looking meditatively before her, thought in all seriousness that perhaps it might.

"I shall go back to London happy now," he proceeded.

"And you won't be away, perhaps, when we come back?" said Elizabeth, with a laugh in her eyes.

"No, indeed; not if I can possibly help it. But even if I am, I shall not be unhappy, for I have your promise."

"Yes. I don't know—it seems to me so odd that this should have happened."

"You don't wish to draw back?"

"No; oh no. I mean no more than that it is strange to me. And so *that* was what brought you down here?"

"It was."

"You must have grown suddenly impatient. How funny!"

A prick, not exactly of conscience, but rather of uneasy recollection, kept Captain Grove from finding a ready answer.

"Will you come up and see papa?" Miss Glendinning asked, after a moment or two.

"No; the fact is—— Could you forgive me, if I asked you to let our talk remain a secret between ourselves for the next week or two?"

It was scarcely possible to know in what point Elizabeth's face changed, but its change expressed a fine shade of dissatisfaction; and the same expression tinged her voice as she answered, "Of course it shall, if you wish it."

"I will tell you why. I don't know that there is very much in it, perhaps. My uncle, you see, regards himself as the head of the family; he would expect to be told first of any such matter; and if I could put it off till I could see him myself, it would

be much better. You see, there is no telling in what temper a letter may find a man. And a man of his property really has a natural right to expect special consideration from his relations."

"Yes, I suppose so," Elizabeth answered, so demurely that the flavour of irony escaped his ear. "Oh yes; I should think it would be much better to wait."

In her heart she added, "He might have waited before he came to me." Another inward voice whispered, "He could bear to wait no longer," and her calm gaze melted into something gentler. She began to realize more plainly that this man beside her held her as a precious thing in his life, and could not endure to risk a chance of delay or failure in making her his own. Strange!—and sweet. An ashamed feeling of her own unsympathetic dulness overcame her; a vast expanding tenderness stirred and rose in her heart like the re-

turning swell of a warm spring. Captain Grove, as he watched the beautiful face slowly awakening from its self-contained quiet to a new world of emotion, felt, perhaps, the keenest thrill of triumph which his somewhat thin experience of life had yet brought to him.

He answered her deep gaze with an elated smile, and Elizabeth, meeting it, vowed within herself that since the power to call up that smile and that glad light of rejoicing was indeed hers, no word or look from her should ever cause them to fade disappointed. How if she could have known the thought which gave its crowning zest to that elation? For he, meanwhile, had before his eyes the vision of a keen young face turned towards him in anxious question, and in his ears rang poor Lawrence O'Brien's words: "What do *you* think, Grove? Do you think I have any chance?" Where was Lawrence O'Brien's

chance now? When would he, with all his money and his youth and his good looks, win such a gaze as this from Elizabeth Glendinning?

His triumph was disturbed by no touch of shame or of remorse. Shame, with him, needed the acid of another's knowledge to bring it to effervescence, and in Elizabeth's eyes lay no shadow of mistrust. She was rather exalting him by ashamed comparison with the poorness of her own feeling.

"I will try," she said again, softly. Then, after a moment's pause, "I think I am glad it is not to be spoken of at once. I want to get used to it. I think, please, I will go home; I want to be by myself a little. You don't mind, do you?"

The tone of submissive appeal was inexpressibly satisfying to him. It was wonderful, he thought, how well she suited him. The fitting reply came easily enough now.

"Not mind?" he answered, smiling. "Why, of course I mind. I should like never to have you out of my sight."

Again Elizabeth returned that deepened look which uttered, in its noblest kind, the 'illness at ease of tenderness under a love which it cannot return.'

She paused, irresolute. But Captain Grove, for all his liking to have her in his sight, had no real intention of keeping her beside him. Perhaps he, too, felt something of her desire to be alone, and to examine this newly turned page of his life unwatched by interested eyes. And the very fulness of her faith in him, which gave a sense of ease in her presence, brought also a contradictory sense of restraint, by reminding him at every turn that it existed and that it might be destroyed. The two had once more paused and were standing face to face; he with his easily worn smile, she with her grave eyes, and with the

pathetic line of lip which belongs so often to the best type of beauty, and carries to the heart of the unaccustomed beholder a self-reproachful pang like that evoked by the frightened eyes of an animal: like an animal's terror in this, too, that it acts as an incentive to the human instinct of cruelty.

"Good-bye, then," said Elizabeth; and thinking that the words sounded cold—as, indeed, they had no special warmth—she added, "When shall I see you again?"

"As soon," he replied, "as I possibly can manage."

His tone was rather self-satisfied than ardent. He drew his hand across the smooth waves of her hair, and bending her head a little backward, kissed her forehead with a quiet air of taking possession, and of rather congratulating himself in the spirit of little Jack Horner. Elizabeth underwent the ceremony quietly, and as their faces parted, drew back a little, and

gave him her hand exactly as she would have done before this meeting. Then again she felt herself remiss, and looked up with a deprecating smile that was tender, apologetic, self-depreciating—everything that can be said in words of the smile a man would have from the woman he loves, but which yet, if it had been given to Orlando, would have smitten him to the heart with the chillest certainty of despair. Captain Grove gave back a smile of triumph, and again she was glad in her power of making him happy.

"But may I not come with you?" he asked.

She paused and said, "I would rather not."

Words are the least part of the speech which we utter to one another. Those insignificant five syllables of answer might have borne any shade of meaning, from the haughtiest denial to a sweeter assent

than "Yes." As she spoke them, they expressed a real preference, but a preference which submitted itself absolutely to his. No tone could have been more pleasing to him. A little motion of the head, courteous and graceful, uttered on his side that her preference was law, and the softest shade of gravity betokened his regret. He stood still, watching the passage of her light figure under the sudden shadows of this or that farther-reaching bough, till she came out into the broad sunshine of the open meadow, making a third brightness between the blue and the green. Then, lifting his chin a little, he laid his hand across his eyes, and suffered his smile to expand.

The copse was crescent-shaped, and the pathway, after traversing the intervening patch of meadow, dipped again into the second horn. The trees stood for the

most part close at the edge of the path; at one spot only, a little amphitheatre of turf came between, and it was here that Orlando lay. His dim, sweet musings had slipped insensibly into sleep, from which the sound of Miss Glendinning's approach aroused him. He opened his eyes, and in the border-land between sleep and waking, received a vision which seemed the embodiment and continuation of his dreams. As yet, his mind was not free from the dream-atmosphere in which the whole personality is concentrated into observation. He lay still, with wide-open eyes, watching her as she drew nearer. She came along in a thin line of light, between two lines of shadow that seemed to fall away from her as she moved; her light dress touched, rustling, against the thin tufts of herbage that grew up between the ruts and round the deep hoof-marks of the way. Her mind was at the very opposite pole of

feeling from Orlando's. He was absorbed in watchfulness of her; she, equally forgetful of all outer things, was entirely immersed in her own thoughts. She was quite unconscious of any second presence, and her face wore the aspect of self-communion which it is impossible, knowingly, to wear under the observation of another. Come suddenly on whom you will, friend, enemy, or casual acquaintance, you will catch of that expression only the retreating wave of its garment, a momentary confusion of images as the magic-lantern slide-shifts.

This change came suddenly to Miss Glendinning. Recognition of an observer's presence sprang into her face, and took the form of a slackening of expression. Her deep, dreamy eyes, awaking to the actual, became merely perceptive; her step took more precision; the grave line of her mouth relaxed into greater indifference.

A reflected change fell upon Orlando. Self-consciousness returned to him also. He remembered that he was lying carelessly upon the ground; that his hair had all fallen back from his forehead, and was probably very untidy; that his tie was out of place, and that crawling things were making him their promenade-ground. He started up, shook himself and stood, flushed and confused, looking mute apology. Miss Glendinning, having bestowed on him a glance of cursory interest as on a creature observed in an unlikely habitat, withdrew her eyes and passed on. If she had been asked whom she had passed on the road, she would probably have answered, "A schoolboy;" and if Orlando could have heard such a question so answered, his undergraduate indignation might have sufficed to stifle the admiration which set Elizabeth Glendinning's face from that day in the centre of his dreams.

CHAPTER III.

AT A DINNER-PARTY.

"Any one watching keenly the stealthy convergence of human lots, sees a slow preparation of effects from one life on another, which tells like a calculated irony on the indifference or the frozen stare with which we look at our unintroduced neighbour. Destiny stands by sarcastic, with our *dramatis personæ* folded in her hand."—*Middlemarch.*

The changes of society's customs are slow, and seem superficial. It is only in comparing times divided by a long interval of years that a significant difference can be perceived. Looking back on the day—somewhere among the later sixties of this century—when Orlando Sherborne lay dreaming in Willingshurst plantation, a swarm of such differences rise, circling in

the memory like moths shaken out from an old garment. To Orlando, when he looks back, as to Orlando's chronicler, that time seems to have been somewhat easier and less urgent than this. Politically, all Europe was at a different stage of growth. Pius IX. was still in the Vatican, Victor Emmanuel at Florence, and Queen Isabella in Spain. France had lain quiet for fifteen years or so with the same hand upon her neck, and unimperial Prussia had only lately evinced, at Sadowa, the possession of an army and a leader. In England, reigned, on the whole, an optimist spirit of peace, and a prosperity less feverish than that which followed. The very toys of life were pursued more easily. Croquet was in its early prime—a relaxation still, rather than a science. Lawn-tennis was not. Art-furniture, art-needlework, and artistic dress, those three despots of to-day, were in their veriest infancy, cherished only

by an eccentric few ; while the potent word *æsthetic* possessed as yet no spell. It was, perhaps (to use another of to-day's shibboleths), a Philistine time, but its Philistinism was supine, and imposed a lighter yoke than the Israelitism which has succeeded. So, at least, it seems to Orlando, to whom in those days life looked plain and easy, as a path seen distinctly on a far hill, that grows vague and confused upon approach.

He came up from that copse of sweet dreams, resolved to discover the name by which his final and fairest vision was known among men. Willingshurst was no more his home than it was Elizabeth's ; he was merely spending there a fortnight of his 'Long' with a college friend.

To this friend—Arthur Rendell—he took an early opportunity of carrying his question.

"Who," he asked, "would a very pretty

girl be, whom I saw just now in Shrubb's Wood?"

Arthur, inclining his head slowly from side to side, like a meditative stork, repeated, "A pretty girl? There isn't a pretty girl in the parish—except Tottie."

"It wasn't Miss Rendell. And she was more than pretty; she was the most beautiful girl I ever saw in my life."

"She may have been one of the villagers, you know," Arthur suggested.

But Orlando scouted the suggestion, on the ground that he knew a lady when he saw her.

Arthur, upon this, could only say he didn't know, and Orlando's question remained unanswered.

But a few days later a dinner-party was given in the neighbourhood, to which he was invited.

As he came into the room, no thought was with him of his unknown beauty:

such visions, although they may make the crises by which to write the history of a life, have by no means an ever-present influence among its superficial comings and goings. The room seemed full. His eye fell upon the familiar faces of the vicar and his wife, and upon a young man who was supposed to admire Miss Rendell. The futile, before-dinner talk was flowing feebly, while the hostess glided gently, an amalgamating influence, from group to group. Orlando, in his turn, was led across the room to a young lady whose face was bent down over an album. The introduction, "Mr. Sherborne—Miss Glendinning," followed, falling upon unexpectant ears, a prelude to much.

Miss Glendinning lifted her face, smiled, and bowed. Orlando, with a sharp stab of pleasure, recognized the lady of Shrubb's Wood. Her beauty struck him afresh, with a kind of venerating wonder. Yet

not in the beauty, as beauty, lay, he thought, its power on him, but in some individual indescribable characteristic, to which something akin in himself answered, as a harp's note answers to a voice speaking beside it. He felt as if his whole soul lay open, transparent as water, beneath the direct gaze of her clear eyes; and his memory paused, suddenly, to feel back across the years into some other life, when, surely, some strong union had been between them.

In the first glance of youth upon a new face there is always something of search and appeal, a desire of finding recognition and fellowship. For every introduction to a new acquaintance is like lifting the cover of a new book, known to us as yet only by its binding, and in youth we are always ready to hope that the unopened volume may contain our own story. With Orlando this curiosity can scarcely be said to have existed in regard to Miss Glendinning, since

the moment of first sight had answered and appeased it. She, on the other hand, although accustomed to a wider and colder range of society, where the lesson of indifference is soon learned, wore pretty clearly the expression of such a feeling. She had, in fact, a little gentle cause for special interest, whose roots lay in a stratum of emotion far removed from his. The silent double gaze lasted but a moment. The strongest emotion, like the keenest dream, can go through the mind with the swiftness of a sword-stroke, leaving behind again the everyday wakefulness to everyday things. Orlando was ready, before Miss Glendinning had yet felt a pause, to strike some indifferent, tentative note of conversation.

"Do you know Willingshurst well?" he asked, speaking with two distinct currents of consciousness running parallel in his soul, like a red and a blue stream of light falling through adjacent panes of a stained window.

"I have stayed here two or three times," she answered, "with my aunt and uncle." Then, pushing the open book a little towards him, "Have you seen this sketch of the Roman villa at Sellingham? You see, this is all restored. I don't know how much is really remaining."

"Oh, a good deal, I believe. It is said to be the most complete specimen of pavement in England. It is quite worth going over to see."

At this point came the general exodus to the dining-room. They followed Mrs. Rendell. Her escort was a stranger to Orlando, and therefore interesting as the possible uncle of Miss Glendinning. He was an elderly man whose appearance might justify the epithet—usually so inapplicable to elderly men — graceful. Orlando, observing him, thought, first, that there would be nothing inappropriate in such a man's relationship to the beautiful

girl on his arm, and secondly, that he was sure he discerned a likeness between them. This, indeed, might well be, since he afterwards discovered that the person so scrutinized was not her uncle, but her father.

In this little pause from speech it recurred to his memory that a schoolfellow of his sister's had borne the name of Glendinning. This might possibly be she; and if so, how delightful a ground for more intimate acquaintance. When they were seated, and dinner had well begun, he turned to put his question, and found that she also had turned to him, and was also in act to speak.

"I think," she said, "it must have been your sister who was a great friend of mine at school—Millie Sherborne."

"Yes," replied Orlando, with a smile of much pleasure. "I was just going to say so to you. I have very often heard her

speak of you." And his memory added that the speech had all been praise.

"Oh yes, we were great friends. She was lonely at school at first, and I think it was a comfort to her when she took to me."

Orlando's fancy, enlarging the bareness of her words by the possibilities of her face, saw her playing the part of a consoling angel to poor, indulged, dominion-loving Millie. A young man's visions, built on such a basis, are apt to be unreliable, but for once they were pretty nearly in harmony with the truth.

"And is she quite well?" Miss Glendinning asked. "Where is she? Not at Willingshurst?"

"Oh no; she is at home, with my father, at Sherborne."

"And I suppose she is quite happy? She always used to say she would be when she left school."

"Yes, I think she is. Certainly she has entirely her own way, which, I think, counts for a good deal with Millie."

"With most of us," said Miss Glendinning.

At this moment occurred one of those sudden silences which are apt to fall unaccountably upon a party of busy talkers, and these two fell into silence with the rest. The vicar, practical Christian that he was, threw himself boldly into the gap, and the waves began to flow again. Orlando, however, did not find his speech so easily return. Miss Glendinning was giving her attention to the man beyond her, and he was not sorry to pause and grow accustomed to her presence. To sit thus, silent, among many speakers is a position which has its peculiar charm. It might be a nice point to consider whether more pleasure may be found in being consciously sought or being unintentionally

forgotten and left to observe, unobserved and unfettered by any debt of attention.

The observation of Orlando was directed almost wholly upon his beautiful neighbour. He tried, for the first time, to look at her critically. Her face was turned from him, leaving him the curved outline of her cheek and an inimitably graceful line of neck. Some anecdote was being told to her; a slight movement showed him the extremest profile of her chin and smiling lips. Few indeed are the faces which will endure prolonged scrutiny in that point of view, bringing into relief, as it does, every defect of mouth, nose, or outline of face. Elizabeth's, however, seemed to him, even thus, more beautiful than any but her own, turned full. As the tale closed she broke into a light, low laugh that, in Orlando's ears, was indescribably harmonious. She turned again towards him, and took up their broken-off talk.

"Did you say you had seen the remains at Sellingham, Mr. Sherborne?"

"No; I had only heard about them. I mean to see them, if I can. It seems a wasting of opportunities, doesn't it, not to go when one is so near?"

"It does, rather. I think I must make papa ride over with me."

"Oh, then she has a father at Willingshurst?" thought Orlando. His eyes travelled round the table, and Miss Glendinning, observing him, said quietly—

"That is my father on the other side of Mrs. Rendell."

"You know Mrs. Rendell?"

"I have met her. I know Miss Rendell."

"I am staying with them, you know."

"Oh, are you? I didn't know. You are quite near us, then. I wonder that we have not met before."

"We have," said Orlando, conscious of

a little mortification. "I saw you on Wednesday morning in Shrubb's Wood."

"Did you? Yes, I remember now; I did pass some one in the wood, but I wasn't paying much attention. I hardly noticed."

Her thoughts went away again. She sank into a short silence, and presently roused herself from it with a little shake and a sigh, saying, "It is a pretty little bit of wood, isn't it? But it is prettiest in the spring. You should see the quantities that there are of primroses and anemones."

"You speak as if you were fond of the spring flowers?"

"Yes, I am. I so seldom see them growing. We are in London generally in the spring. I happened to be here for Easter this year, and my cousin and I rode through. Afterwards, we came down again to get a lot for the church. We—

I mean all of us from my uncle's—decorated our chancel by ourselves, all with wild-flowers."

. . . . And so on. Why report their words any further? Has it not been said already that our words make the smallest part of our speech? Why reproduce talk which touched no deep notes of feeling, opinion, or principle, but which yet sufficed to establish between two young people a ground of sympathy, liking, and approval? Look back—if your memory yet retains the record—to your own first conversation with the nearest and dearest of your friends. It is enough to say that Orlando received the impression of an exquisite fitness, grace, and harmony. To him it appeared that her every tone and motion had chimed in fine accord with some preconceived ideal of his own. Who shall decide how far in such a case the woman does indeed accord with the ideal,

and how far it is the ideal which accords itself to her?

Elizabeth passed away to the drawing-room; Orlando was left to try and recall her features and her tones. What a waste of time, he thought, to sit here, needlessly imbibing wine and hearing these country gentlemen enunciate slowly their commonplace opinions! This was not, it may be noted, a usual mood with him. Nothing was further from Orlando's nature, or more repugnant to his habits of thought, than the small customary cynicism, the spirit of petty arrogance, through whose medium so many young men see the world a desert and their fellow-creatures fools. He was glad, however, to observe, amid his misanthropy, that Miss Glendinning's father spoke little and by no means dogmatically, but with a gentle, deprecatory air, as who should say, "I speak, of course, under correction."

When at last the moment arrived for

migration to the drawing-room, it need hardly be said that his first glance was one of search for Miss Glendinning. She was sitting by an elderly lady of dignified appearance. On her other hand was an empty chair, to which he immediately advanced. She received him with a smile, and said—

"I have been talking to my aunt about Sellingham. This is Mr. Sherborne, auntie—my aunt, Lady Mary Oakes. She suggests making a party to drive over and picnic in the park."

"We have been intending to go for quite a long time," said Lady Mary, "but I thought we would wait until Elizabeth was with us. We must see what day will suit your uncle, my dear. It is a pity Gilbert is not at home; he knows all about it, and would have explained it all. He is so good at anything of that kind."

"Yes; but I dare say we shall find our way," Elizabeth answered.

"And so you are Miss Sherborne's brother?" Lady Mary continued, turning again to Orlando. "How very nice, now, happening to meet in this way! I trust your sister is very well?"

"Thank you, yes," said Orlando.

"And as pretty as ever, I suppose? I remember Elizabeth pointing her out to us at Miss Maxwell's. I know we thought her decidedly the prettiest girl in the house."

Orlando glanced involuntarily at Elizabeth, but her face expressed no dissentient claim.

"And are you making a long stay here? I trust we may have the pleasure of seeing you at The Oaks. Isn't it odd, now, our house happening to be called that? It was called The Oaks before we came into the neighbourhood; and really, as my husband said, it could not have been named more appropriately."

She smiled so benignantly that Orlando was obliged to smile too. Then, returning upon her original starting-point—as she had a happy knack of doing—she pursued, "Let me see; did you tell me how long you would be here?"

"Until the middle of next week, I think."

"And you will remember The Oaks, won't you?"

"Thank you; oh yes."

"And then we must arrange some day for Sellingham, you know. Just a nice little party. Let me see; ourselves, and you, and young Rendell and his sister. Isn't she another pretty girl, Mr. Sherborne? Oh, and of course we must ask Mr. Wheelwright. Now, Mr. Sherborne, of course *you* can tell us—are they really engaged? You'll think me a terribly gossipping old woman, I dare say; but I assure you it is only kindly gossip that I like. I'm always pleased to hear of any good happening

to anybody. Of course, if anything bad should happen, it is as well to know that too, because, if not, one might say the wrong thing by mistake, you know."

"But I assure you that I am not at all in Miss Rendell's confidence," said Orlando. "I have no doubt you know a great deal more about her than I do."

"Ah, now you are sarcastic; as much as to tell me that I am interfering. But I am hardened, you know—quite hardened; my husband tells me that every day of my life."

Orlando, with rather unnecessary vehemence, protested his innocence of any sarcastic meaning.

The vicar now came up.

"Miss Glendinning, I have been trying to speak to you ever since we came in. How are you, after the fatigues of your fashionable life? Delighted to welcome you to Willingshurst once more." He

smiled and shook hands with her. "And how is your cousin? Away again, I hear. What a wanderer he is! You should exert your influence to keep him with us—you should, indeed."

"I am afraid I should rather use it to get taken with him. His letters have made us quite in love with Norway. If only papa were equal to the fatigue of it, I should enjoy nothing more than such a trip."

In Orlando's mind ran the vaguest of dreams that he might marry her and take her thither. Nearer and more distinct lay a jealous curiosity concerning this often-mentioned cousin.

The vicar, rocking himself gently forward and backward, replied, "If your idea of Norway is so bright a one, you would do well to avoid verification; for, you know

> 'Tis distance lends enchantment to the view,
> And paints yon heaven with its azure hue.'

You might find many disadvantages upon a nearer acquaintance."

"Yes, very likely. I had better try and think so, since I cannot go."

"Your cousin is Lady Mary's son?" said Orlando.

"Yes, her only son. I wish you had met him; everybody likes him," answered Elizabeth, who was of course in happy ignorance of Lawrence O'Brien's opinion.

Orlando, however, could not feel any strong desire for Mr. Oakes's acquaintance. It seemed decidedly preferable to imagine him in Norway without Elizabeth, rather than in Willingshurst with her.

"My dear," said Lady Mary, laying her hand on Elizabeth's, "Mrs. Warnham is so anxious to hear you play that very pretty thing of Schumann's that you played at her house in the spring."

"Oh, please, if you can remember it," pleaded Mrs. Warnham from Lady Mary's left.

Elizabeth rose and went to the piano. Orlando followed. Music was one of the many points concerning which he was fastidious ; a coarse or harsh performance would have been a shock from which his young admiration might not, perhaps, have recovered. He was not, however, put to the test. Miss Glendinning's music was, like herself, quite up to society's standard, but in a line a little aside. In all her words and acts she seemed to refer to some private measure of her own, following the customs round her 'with a difference.' You felt that she followed them, not because others did, but because they accorded with her own inner law, and were assured that in a moment of emergency, intuition, not imitation, would be her guide. So, though she played the same music as her contemporaries, and with about the same degree of skill, she did not play exactly as they did. A music-master might have com-

plained that her own thought shone through, where she should have sought only to convey the composer's, but to a lover's ear the interpretation was all the sweeter for breathing of herself.

As she rose from the piano, she was absorbed into a group of ladies, and Orlando could but watch her from afar. Nor did he again hear her voice until she bade him good night, and begged him to give her love to Millie when he should next write.

"And you'll remember The Oaks, won't you, Mr. Sherborne?" said Lady Mary, nodding and smiling as she passed him.

Orlando, it need hardly be said, assured her fervently that he would.

Elizabeth, when she walked into her uncle's house, saw a letter awaiting her. A slight flush came into her cheek. She took it up. The writing was unfamiliar; she was sure it must be Captain Grove's.

"You saw your letter, Lizzie?" said her

uncle, as she came with her aunt and father into the room where he was sitting.

"Yes, uncle, thank you," she answered. But she did not open it. She held it in her hand, beneath her cloak, and felt the pulses of her fingers throb faster against it.

Alone in her own room she read it, the slow red deepening in her face. It was a letter of no special import. A woman, whose susceptibilities love had sharpened, might well have felt it cold. To Elizabeth the mere beginning and ending—'My dearest Elizabeth,' 'Yours ever, E. Grove'—breathed a warmth which almost frightened her, and left her ashamed again of being able to give so little in return.

And Orlando, meanwhile, was walking up and down, sleepless, pausing now and again to watch the slow travelling of the moon, and haunted by a wailing melody of Schumann's.

Truly, Destiny stands by, sarcastic.

CHAPTER IV.

ANTIQUITIES.

"My love and I went hand in hand,
All under the green trees;
The little birds in all the land
Were singing melodies.

"And in their singing, all the birds,
Meseemèd, did but say,
How man, with all his deeds and words,
Doth quickly pass away!"

A New Garland of Poesy.

ORLANDO, in his blindness, was of opinion that Destiny—the mocker—was particularly favourable to him. Had she not granted a link of interest between him and Elizabeth? Had she not caused Elizabeth's aunt to smile upon him, and—sweetest thought of all!—permitted the

prospect of a happy day together at Sellingham? And happy indeed it was; a day to be looked back upon with tender regret; sanctified by the memory, not of events, but of tranquillity.

His way led him through Shrubb's Wood. At one point of the path, he paused. Here he had seen Elizabeth, a week ago to-day. How far off and dim seemed now the vague lookings onward upon which her presence broke!—as far away, he thought, as a man's recollected childhood. The very world he walked in was altered by the knowledge that she was in it. He knelt and gathered a leaf or two of grass from the place where he had lain. Some day, he thought, he might show them to her, and tell her how she had come upon his life like a bright dawn. He was but one and twenty, recollect, and was alone. The action, which has a touch of the comic when it comes to be openly

recorded, wears a different significance to youth and solitude. Not that Orlando reflected upon the character of his action at all. He shut the green blades into his pocket-book and followed the path by which she had gone. The sky was clear above him: the intensity of its blue had begun to turn towards the paleness of autumn, and the first autumn leaves were beginning to change too, and to fall. A soft breeze stirred in the warm air, and lifted the scent of the second hay-crop over the hedges.

Within the gates of The Oaks he met Major Glendinning, slowly pacing the lawn. Together, they passed through a long window into the drawing-room, where Lady Mary, her niece, and her two little girls, were waiting. The group was one in which a good portrait-painter might have rejoiced. A strong likeness ran through the four faces. Elizabeth's was the perfect

type, whose fine lines had a little lost their definiteness in her aunt, and were yet incompletely developed in her cousins. The cousins were handsome children, slightly built, tall, and of a bright fairness. They were dressed alike. Orlando took them to be twins, and was puzzled all day by the difficulty of deciding which was Ida and which was Maud.

Lady Mary received him with her usual flow of amiable, if not very original, discourse.

"What a delicious day, isn't it? As I said to my husband, we could not have had a finer, if we had been able to choose. Maudie dear, do get your papa to come in from his grapes. My husband is so devoted to his gardening, Mr. Sherborne—it is quite a passion with him. And here comes Miss Rendell. So pleased to see you, my dear. And how is your mother? Mr. Wheelwright is keeping us all waiting. How very improper! Ah! here you are,

George. And I see Mr. Wheelwright on the lawn. Now we are all ready. If only Gilbert could be here, to complete the party! Oh, thank you, Mr. Rendell. Yes, it is my parasol. Thank you; I certainly should have left it behind. The waggonette is ready, isn't it, George?"

Orlando had drawn as near as he could to Elizabeth, but her attention was occupied by Miss Rendell, whose arm she now drew, smilingly, through her own. He followed them down the path, debating in his mind the question whether it was more desirable to sit next to the lady of your admiration, or opposite to her. At dinner, no doubt, it was advantageous to sit next her, but how in a waggonette, with no intervening barrier of dinner-table? He might, however, have spared himself so much consideration, for when the time came, no choice remained to him of sitting at Miss Glendinning's side. He found

himself placed opposite to her, and immediately concluded, first, that this situation was the best, and next, that he had never at all appreciated her beauty until now. Hers was not one of the faces in which the tone of colouring is the most impressive characteristic. These, however striking, are seldom, I think, the most enduringly irresistible. The completely fascinating faces are those which, like the marbles of antiquity, leave no certain impression of dark or light in hair or eyes; and are endowed, like them, with the power of presenting both aspects. Elizabeth Glendinning's was a face of this kind. In bright sunshine, or beneath a glare of gas, her hair would take all the wonderful golden lights and liquid shadows of fairness, and her eyes would glance up suddenly with a bright transparency of depth which left you in assurance of their blueness. But in another mood, or beneath

another light, the framing waves of hair were as dark as the shadows that fall on a sunny day, and her deep eyes were like those of a southern painter's saint.

No very distinct conversation was kept up. The pleasant influences of sky, air, and rapid motion brought on a serene, silent content. Lady Mary, indeed, maintained a gentle monologue, and Ida and Maudie exchanged little calls on each other's attention, which had something of the charm, and after a time something of the monotony, of the chirping of two birds. Orlando, perhaps, enjoyed the drive most, having the gift of that deep love of nature which is like in kind to the love of music. And to-day the enjoyment was, as it were, transfigured by the companionship of Elizabeth.

As they went on, the day grew hotter, the road whiter, and the edges of the shadows sharper. At last the high-road,

with its atmosphere of reflected heat, gave place to the shade and greenness of the park. A halt was made, a place chosen for luncheon, and luncheon itself fixed for three-quarters of an hour later. Meanwhile the party divided, and spread in twos and threes about the shady slopes.

The two little cousins hovered round Elizabeth.

"There's a lake down here, Cousin Lizzie."

"Cousin Lizzie, come with us, won't you?"

She turned away accordingly, followed by her pair of golden-haired satellites. Orlando, hastening to join the nearer of the children, asked—

"Is it a pretty lake?"

"Oh yes, lovely," she answered, looking up with the pretty, childish face that was an immature copy of Elizabeth's. "And there are swans in it, and we have some

bread for them. Shouldn't you like to see them?"

"Very much indeed," said Orlando.

For a few moments the little girl walked sedately by his side, until a call from her sister invited her to race down the bank. She flew off, and Orlando, quickening his pace a little, came up with Miss Glendinning. They were on a steep, grassy slope, bordered below by trees, and between the trees shone the gleams of water. The hillside was rather slippery; Elizabeth called to the children to take care.

"Will *you* not take my hand?" asked Orlando.

She shook her head, and, with a smile, refused.

A yard or so lower down, he himself slipped, and had a moment's difficulty in regaining his footing. Miss Glendinning caught his wrist. Both laughed, and she said, lightly, "If I had trusted to you, you would have pulled me down."

"No; I should have been more careful, if I had felt you depending on me."

She smiled approvingly upon the quick answer, almost as apt as one of Captain Grove's, and thought in herself how pleasant a manner this brother of Millie's had.

They came down upon a path which rounded the lake. Trees arched above them, and pushed their rough roots through the shifting soil; the lake rippled and glimmered on their left, and the children flitted to and fro between the lights and shadows, like butterflies. The path sloped slightly upwards, leaving an ever-heightening bank between itself and the lake. To Orlando's fancy it took a momentary parable-likeness to the whole of life.

"I feel as if we were walking in an allegory," he said to Elizabeth.

She scarcely understood; her face asked for clearer exposition.

"Here is our path of life, leading we can't quite see where; on each side of us we can't quite see what, and above us a sky that we can only see bits of, between the branches."

Elizabeth rather liked the simile, and carried it on.

"In the spring, before the leaves came, we could have seen more of it—and that was the time of flowers, too; and in the winter, when they are gone again, it will be most plainly visible of all. And what are we?"

"The typical man and woman, perhaps," Orlando ventured to suggest.

"No, now you are out of the line of allegory. There should be three characters: the good spirit, the bad spirit, and the soul between. The typical man and woman belong to a different era altogether."

Orlando kept his next fancy to himself.

The children had momentarily disappeared from sight, and it was as if he and his companion were the only inhabitants of this green island, cut off by the waters of the lake from the rest of the world. Presently, a rustle and a white motion on the water drew their eyes that way. Ida came into sight, clapping her hands and crying, "Oh, the swans!"

She pushed her way through the bushes to the lake's immediate edge. The others followed. Here was a little space of grass, treacherously thick and green. An old willow, whose low-branching stems had left a nest in their midst, offered a safer platform. Among the slender, outgrowing branches, dipped and floated a moored boat; and the leisurely swans sat, white, upon the surface of the water, the sun gleaming from their slowly stirring wings. The children were among the willow stems in a moment. Elizabeth, stepping lightly

to a level just below them, laid a hand on each, and bade them take care.

"Oh, Elizabeth, the swans won't see us! Look, they don't come to the crumbs a bit. It is these nasty little willows in the water. We can't get to the real lake."

"I wish we could get into the boat."

"*I* could, if somebody would hold me. I could walk along the branch and drop. Do, Elizabeth, let us."

"The boat would plop down when you jumped in," said the sager Maudie.

"Let me," said Orlando. "I could reach the cord of the boat from where you are standing. I think that would be safe, Miss Glendinning."

Ida scrambled back from her place above the water, and Orlando, giving his hat into her charge, went cautiously forward, drew the boat nearer, and swung himself into it. "Now, Miss Ida, if you can walk along the branch, I can lift you down."

The manœuvre was accomplished, and the children successfully handed from Elizabeth in the tree to Orlando in the boat. Elizabeth, being invited to follow, declined to venture, and remained sitting in the willow, looking like a modernized tree-nymph.

"I wish I could paint," she said, presently, as she sat watching the group below: Ida standing, steadied by Orlando's hand, throwing her bread with an eager sweep of the arm; Maudie seated, and making, with less demonstration, a longer cast; between them Orlando, bareheaded, the sun falling full upon his pleasant, dark-tinted face, and bringing brown lights into his dark hair.

The swans had drawn doubtfully nearer, and took the bread from as far off as they could. Soon the supply was at end, but the children were not yet tired of their situation. They saw some forget-me-nots.

Could not the boat be drawn towards them? How was it there were no sculls? Orlando, leaning out to reach a distant bough, with a full consciousness that he would very possibly overbalance, drew the boat's head towards the bank. Four eager little hands thrust themselves among the myosotis leaves, and drew back, startled by the drop and plunge of a water-rat. When their courage had returned, and all the blue blossoms had fallen before them, Orlando relaxed his hold, and the boat swung slowly round, and lay oscillating in its former place. But now Maudie complained that the rocking made her giddy, and Ida caught sight of a bush of blackberries, as large and full as blackberries are observed to become in marshy places. A re-ascent was therefore made; the children gave their flowers to Elizabeth's care, and scampered away to the new attraction of the blackberries. Orlando swung him-

self up, took back his hat, and seated himself beside her, with a feeling that the world could offer nothing pleasanter than this.

Elizabeth, too, was quite satisfied. As she sat thus, among these peaceful surroundings, her own future seemed tranquil too. She was not imaginative, nor deeply introspective. She did not anxiously compare her own nature and Captain Grove's; she accepted what had come to her, easily, and felt a quiet, unanalyzed trust that the future would be acceptable in the same manner. Of Orlando, except, perhaps, as a figure in the background, her thoughts took no reckoning at all. How strange a revelation would the heart of each have been to the other! For she, in his, was not only the foremost, but the only figure. He was at the sweetest point of life's development — the first bloom of consciously awaking love. The question of

his love's return had hardly as yet begun to trouble him. Without making clear the feeling to himself, he vaguely trusted that a power which had been strong enough to alter the whole aspect of his world would be strong enough also to work out its own completion. The notion of Elizabeth's engagement to another man would have seemed a monstrous dislocation of nature's order.

They sat thus, side by side, nursing each a thought whose utterance would have fallen like a thunderbolt among the thoughts of the other; happy and unconscious, breathing a pleasant atmosphere of ignorantly sympathetic liking.

The children came back from their blackberry bush, and the four took their way together to the place of luncheon. Elizabeth was at once busy in the opening and unpacking of baskets. Orlando found himself in attendance on Lady Mary;

there was no time for intimate talk, or even for sustained observation. The meal had the pleasant individuality, the petty mishaps, and impromptu expedients which give a charm to such occasions. Slight witticisms, ready laughter, and happy-sounding voices rose on the summer air, and floated under the green arches of softly stirring shade.

Orlando sat tranquilly by Elizabeth, watching the serene beauty of her face, and beginning to have hopes that his vicinity was acceptable to her. As luncheon came to an end, the plan of the afternoon was discussed. The Roman remains, it appeared, were situated about half-way between the park and the village of Sellingham. The key would have to be inquired for in the village, which lay on a well-kept carriage road; but the villa was to be reached more easily by a footpath. The party therefore divided; Lady Mary and

her brother-in-law driving to the village, while the others went, on foot, in search of the Roman villa. The field-way by which they went was narrow, and often rugged. Orlando could not have the joy of walking at Miss Glendinning's side; he had to content himself with following her, watching the grace of her motion, and hearing, from time to time, the music of her voice. Mr. Oakes walked just before her, maintaining a botanical discussion, and, every few minutes, quitting the path to come and walk on the rough field at her side, while he held up some fresh-gathered specimen for inspection. The energy with which he spoke when such subjects were under debate, was to Orlando the opening of a side-door into an unsuspected store-house—a glimpse of the private study, which, alone, in the conventionally well-furnished house was allowed to retain a character of its own.

When the path had left behind it three or four fields and a due complement of stiles, Mr. Oakes, turning, announced, "This must be the place; we must go up here, to the right."

Everybody looked that way. In a sloping field stood a little group of flint and brick built huts. A gate and path gave access to them. At the gate they paused, for Major Glendinning and Lady Mary, with the key, were not yet in sight. Before them, as they rested against the gate, stretched a wide landscape, rising softly to the far, blue hills. It was a fertile land; green pastures, and fields yellow with ripened corn, lay defined by lines of dividing hedgerow. Scattered farms showed white against their encircling orchards; the sunshine twinkled on smooth slopes of hayrick, and at one point the gilded arrow on the gable of a dove-cote caught and threw back a line of golden

light. In Orlando's memory rang, as they had rung all the afternoon, the words of that companion of Marmion, who,

> 'Making demi-volte in air,
> Cried, "Where's the coward would not dare
> To fight for such a land?"'

Turning, and passing through the gate, they had before them the four or five bare huts, standing, mysterious, in the uncultivated patch of field. In bleak hill districts you may come on many a barn or storehouse standing up thus, bare from the ground, unfenced, and built of flints or bricks pressed into a groundwork of plaster. Any one familiar with them will remember the peculiar sense of desolation belonging to such spots, and can understand the faint reflex of it cast, now, upon the beholders by this change of scene. They walked on, slowly. From the wall of the hut immediately before them nodded a climbing rose tree—a rose tree which had

been planted and partly trained, and which retained the many-petalled blossom of the cultivated stock, but was verging towards the pale colour and the too rapid falling of its wilder kindred. Arthur tried the door, but found it locked. A longer hut at the side of the footpath appeared to possess no door, but had two or three rough steps where grass grew up between the bricks.

"We might as well sit down ; don't you think so ?" said Elizabeth.

Her uncle seated himself at her side. Orlando stood by, unwilling to take the sole remaining place. But Miss Rendell, accompanied by Mr. Wheelwright, turned towards a stile some few yards further on, while the children, discovering, round the corner of the hut, a second set of steps, established themselves there with Arthur, and bursts of laughter presently gave evidence that they were well amused.

Orlando, therefore, was able, with a clear conscience, to seat himself at Miss Glendinning's side, and sat listening, with grave attention, to her uncle's disquisition on the flora of the neighbourhood. She had fixed the bunch of forget-me-nots in the front of her dress; Orlando watched them rise and fall at every breath. Years afterwards, he could recall their outline, their colour, the droop of the fading leaves.

Presently, the voice of Lady Mary was heard. They rose to meet her. She was in active conversation with a quiet, middle-aged woman who had come to act as guide. Major Glendinning followed, blowing a blue cloud from his cigarette. The children came up, curious and impatient. Miss Rendell and Mr. Wheelwright more slowly followed.

They were admitted to one of the buildings, which was perhaps twenty feet square. Compared with the sunshine

without, the interior was dark and cool. The walls were bare; the roof showed its dusty rafters and the under surface of its thatch. But the floor was in odd contrast with these rough surroundings. The large central square, kept from incautious feet by a wooden railing, was occupied by a mosaic pavement, wrought in white and black, pale red and bluish grey. The colours, the design, and the even surface were, in most parts, as well preserved as if it had been the modern floor-cloth to which Maudie likened it. They stood, bent over the slight fence, looking down in silence. A deep geometrical pattern made the border; within, were bands and divisions, variously wrought with figures, flowers, animals, or strange, interlacing devices.

"These are Cupids; this is supposed to be a dancing nymph; these, you see, are gladiators," said the show-woman.

Orlando stood with his eyes fixed on

the gladiators—little grotesque figures in whom size and material forbade very strict adherence to the lines of the human form, yet endowed with a vitality and individuality which brought the scene forcibly to mind. Opposite, leaned Miss Rendell with her lover, and their hands, hidden in the folds of her dress, sought each other.

"When was this discovered?" inquired Mr. Oakes.

"In 1811, sir. It was always known that there had been Roman buildings hereabout; they used to come on the walls in ploughing, and, one day, the plough struck on the pavement, and they dug down, and brought it all to light. You can see the place where the plough struck."

She pointed to a gap, which looked like a torn hole in a carpet. The scene rose before the eyes of all: the men ploughing, the autumn sky, the cornfield, the sudden shock and jar, the straining horses, the

rending earth, the little blocks of coloured stone scattered up; then the pause, the horses standing, the dim wonder of the men, the momentary touching of old and new. Orlando, glancing round, saw that the walls rested upon thicker, stone-built remnants. Beneath the same roof was enclosed a smaller square of pavement, belonging, doubtless, to some antechamber or vestibule. Between the two were ranged short lengths of broken columns, erect or lying, according to the extent of their breakage.

"The whole villa covered four acres; they are always turning up bits of the pipes, and bones, and what not. You see those square pipes—flues like—run right away under, and they are all in that kind of half-baked clay, with that same pattern scratched on."

They came out again into the sunshine, crossed a patch of grass, and entered a

second building. This was larger; the designs, too, were on a more extensive scale. At one end was an octangular basin, with the hole still left in the centre whence a fountain once had sprung. At the other end, between two peacocks, was a circular medallion, enclosing a more than life-sized face. By some strange irony of chance, its colours were as clear, its surface as smooth, as if the mosaic had been laid but yesterday. The fixed eyes gazed up at them, one brow a little raised; the mouth's proud curve of half smile had a lifelike inequality. It was impossible not to imagine in it some weird, self-contemplative existence.

"This is supposed to be Juno," said the woman.

"Ah, of course; there are the peacocks," observed Orlando, turning to Miss Glendinning.

Her eyes were fixed upon Juno's; the

involuntary imitation which grows of self-forgetful attention had called into her face a similar expression. He did not, then, or soon afterwards, feel that the moment had stamped itself ineffaceably, but after a long interval its impression returned and haunted him.

They came, next, to the long hut without a door, on the steps of which they had rested. Two feet or so above the topmost step was a square window-hole, closed by wooden shutters. These their guide threw back, and, standing on the step, they looked in by twos and threes. At first the view within was very obscure. Only a space beneath the opening was clearly visible. Vague darkness shrouded the main part of the hut, and lurked, thick, in its distant corners. The opening of a second similar window on the opposite side, however, let in a broad stream of light upon the soiled and defaced pave-

ment. Only fragments were here left distinct, but they were the most artistic and original of any. In one place lay a little heap of worn-edged bones. Orlando and Miss Glendinning were among the last to take their turn. As they leaned, side by side, on the ledge, looking down upon an old man's head, white-haired and muffled—a winter left alone of the four seasons—the hut was darkened. Lifting their eyes to the bright square opposite, they saw it half filled by the faces of the children. The golden light streamed through their golden hair, the soft colouring of their cheeks gained a finer delicacy from the nearness of the rough-cast walls. Beside them peeped and fluttered a spray of pale, full-blossomed roses. Behind them, a cloudless background, lay the sky, and in front, the dark shed with the broken Roman pavement and the heap of bones. Never was sermon in stones more eloquently preached.

"Look!" said Orlando, softly.

Elizabeth's eyes followed his, and his thought reflected itself in hers.

Looking in, presently, from the other side, they saw, among much that was irrecoverably marred, one panel clean as if newly washed. It bore no pattern, but instead, the two irregularly placed initials 'I. R.' What was their meaning? Were they the artist's, or the owner's? They looked, and guessed in vain, taking back their thoughts to the time when Rome stood like a rabbit-burrowed bank, solid to the eye, but crumbling away, within; to days when, perhaps, Lucretius was still questioning the earth, and early Christians, as they went serenely to their death, were comforted by the nearness of a founder to whose very voice ears yet alive had listened. And now remained only the inarticulate 'I. R.' hidden so long beneath an English field, and brought to light, at last, for

English eyes to gaze down upon and wonder at, for a few minutes, and turn away from, and forget. Elizabeth, before she turned away, lifted her face for an instant to the sky. The surroundings, the races of men, the very forms of the land, had changed; but the Roman, looking up from the setting of his last block, had looked to a sky like this which her mute gaze claimed as a link between them. Orlando observing, silent as she was silent, felt the action as the very seal of mental union, the assurance of a sympathy only to be compared with that of two instruments tuned to one pitch. Upon the solemnity of his mood descended a mellowing serenity—a calm, deep happiness, too full for mirthfulness or many words. There was but little more to see. A smaller hut, lying apart, covered a singularly perfect and beautiful Medusa, but the face had not the lifelikeness of Juno's. The impres-

sion which it produced was comparatively pale. The objects already looked upon, the contrast of living youth with the dead past, the inscrutable 'I. R.,' had raised a train of thought into which the Medusa merely fitted, filling up a corner. Perhaps, if this had been the spot first visited, the process might have been reversed.

Again Orlando and Elizabeth, coming last from the previous hut, were the last to look in. The others were returning to the first room.

"Why are they going back?" Orlando asked, with a little surprise.

On following, the answer was easy to be found. A rough table and chair, an open book, pen and ink, waited for the names of visitors.

From a solidly fashioned cupboard were brought out a blackened dagger and a broken vase or two. On a shelf below lay

some dozen of books whose register was filled up; lower still were some thigh and arm bones, and the skull of an elk. Elizabeth, when she had viewed these relics, went to the table. Orlando, presently, followed. She tried the pen, looked at it suspiciously, dried it on a scrap of blotting-paper, dipped it and tried again; then drew the inkstand nearer, examined its depths, and shook her head.

"If these books are to be kept as specimens, the next generation will not give us a good character for handwriting."

She yielded her place and the pen to Orlando, whose eyes fastened eagerly upon the shining autograph. An unbiassed judgment might have seen in it little beyond the typical handwriting of the time, disfigured by the influences of a pen that was too thin, and ink that was too thick. Orlando, however, discerned in it something of its writer's peculiar charm. He

set his own name beneath, rejoicing at the proximity; then, with a last look back at the pavement, passed out into the sunny outer world.

CHAPTER V.

IN A DRAWING-ROOM.

"Vous chantiez? J'en suis fort aise;
Eh bien! Dansez maintenant."

La Fontaine.

The waggonette had been temporarily abandoned, for the sake of wandering through a wood. Arthur, who had hitherto been a little in the background, was now making amends to himself by leading the way with Miss Glendinning. Miss Rendell and Mr. Wheelwright were out of sight, exploring a narrow side-path which was reported to come in again farther along. The children were skipping hither and thither, according to their wont, while the

remaining four walked sedately, two and two, enjoying the pure air and the perfume of the fir trees, with which, as in a fabric of two colours, mingled the duller scent of the bracken. Orlando walked at Lady Mary's side, listening and answering, easily. His eyes followed the motions of Elizabeth, and he felt a serene, perfect content. At the end of the wood, they reached a gate. Beyond, lay a wide expanse of fields, their gentle downward and stronger upward slopes ending, against the sky, in a soft, boldly sweeping line of hills. Here the lovers reappeared, Arthur and Elizabeth stopped, and the divided groups melted into one. The lights of sunset were beginning to spread across the sky. Miss Rendell was saying something to her brother of this being their nearest way home.

"But, my dear, you don't want to go home," interposed Lady Mary. "*Of course*

you are all coming back with us. I counted upon it. Oh yes, I quite took it for granted. We are going to have an unceremonious dinner-tea at half-past seven. I don't know what hours you London people keep, but six is our dinner-time here in Willingshurst, Mr. Sherborne. And then I thought we might have a little music. Oh, you really must."

Everybody said, "Oh, thank you;" and the thanks of Orlando, at least, were sincere.

"That is settled, then," said Mr. Oakes. "The next question is—shall we go along the fields here to the waggonette, or shall we turn back through the wood?"

"The wood we know: what are the merits of the fields?" inquired his brother-in-law.

"Well, you escape going back the same way."

"I don't quite know that that is an advantage when the first way was so

pleasant," Mr. Wheelwright remarked, looking across the open fields with some disparagement.

"Are there not stiles by the field-way, George?" asked Lady Mary, solemnly.

"I think it very likely. But the thing is, *Zostera nana* has been found not far from the stepping-stones in the brook."

"Stepping-stones! My dear George, you don't expect me to cross stepping-stones?"

"I remember once carrying you across some," her husband began; but she, resolutely shaking her head, interrupted—

"Yes, when I was seventeen, and weighed seven stone. (I did indeed, Elizabeth.) I should not like you to try, now. But you go down that way, if you want to find your *Zostera*. Only I know you will get your feet wet, and have rheumatism."

"So you will, papa," said Maudie, with the drollest echo of her mother.

"You monkey! you want to come with me."

"Well, papa," put in Ida, "you know that it would make you go much more carefully if we were with you. You see, if you got your own feet wet, you could not scold us."

"And either consummation is equally devoutly to be wished—eh? Well, well! Come, then, you children, and we will keep the feet dry if we can."

The others turned slowly from the gate, and Orlando found an opportunity of joining Arthur and Miss Glendinning.

They were speaking of Ida and Maudie. Miss Glendinning was saying, in answer to some remark of his, "Yes; a natural companionship like that is a great advantage—and sometimes a great trouble. I used to wonder, at school, how some of the girls who had sisters seemed to value each other so little. It was quite a proverb that nobody quarrelled except sisters."

"It takes a certain degree of friendship even to quarrel," suggested Orlando.

"Yes, perhaps. I never thought of it in that way."

"And you don't like people a bit the worse for quarrelling with them, you know," added Arthur.

"I think that *I* should," said Miss Glendinning. "But it was not only that they quarrelled. So often they seemed to think that a sister was a kind of natural enemy, a person whom you had to hold your own against very jealously, and towards whom you had no need to be polite or considerate."

"I have seen that with brothers at school," remarked Orlando.

"And we, who had no sister, should have been so glad of one. I suppose children who have not one always think that."

"I don't think you would have quarrelled with your sister," said Arthur.

"I hope not. Ida and Maudie don't quarrel."

"Did Millie at all fill the place to you?" asked Orlando, looking up.

"More nearly than any one else," Elizabeth answered, gently. She would not say to Millie's brother that Millie had rather required the offices of a sister than been willing to fulfil them.

"She was solitary too, wasn't she?"

"Yes; only Millie had a brother. But, then, I had my cousin, who has been as much to me as many girls' brothers are. I wonder whether boys feel the same solitariness when they have not a brother?"

"I think it is a much greater loss to a man, you know, to be without sisters," said Arthur, preparing the way for a compliment.

"I suppose it depends," said Orlando, answering Elizabeth. "I know I never did. But, then, my father filled up every gap."

"Ah!" said Elizabeth, almost enviously. Her thoughts rested upon the happy relation of such a father and son. His tone suggested complete unity and mutual trust. She wished it could be so with her. Thus far, it had been her lot, in all her friendships, to be the stronger. Only from Gilbert had she known anything of the comfort of equal companionship, and Gilbert was in Norway. There was not in her mind any hope of gaining such friendship from Orlando. He was the brother of Millie, ranked upon the same level as one younger —more likely to need than to render aid. Then she thought of a secret and cherished wish of Gilbert's, and her glance alighted upon her companion with a questioning expression difficult to define exactly.

Orlando, feeling her eyes upon him, raised his own. Their looks met; hers scrutinizing, his inquiring mutely the cause of this scrutiny.

"I wish you and Gilbert knew each other."

Orlando, musing afterwards upon the words, found in them some ground of encouragement. Her next words, too, might, he thought, bear a hopeful interpretation.

"How soon are you going away?"

"On Friday, unfortunately."

"Ah! I am sorry."

"So am I," Orlando answered, in a heartfelt tone.

Arthur, during this short interchange of look and speech, had fallen behind to answer a question of Major Glendinning's. He now rejoined them, humming a bar or two of an opera melody. Elizabeth's step set itself to the time. Turning to Orlando, she asked, suddenly—

"By-the-by, do you sing?"

"A little. Why?"

"I thought, by the way you listened, the other night, that you must be musical; and

your voice, in speaking, sounds as if you might."

It was true: Orlando's voice was that of a finely strung instrument, clear and full —a voice that would have been priceless to him as an actor or an orator.

"He sings awfully well, Miss Glendinning," said Arthur, in an aside.

"Do you sing?" asked Orlando, in part overhearing, and anxious to divert Arthur's commendations.

"No; I never could. I have wished it more than anything; but it is no use—I can't."

"You mustn't expect to do everything better than everybody else, you know," said Arthur, with a frank, boyish smile that disarmed annoyance at the openness of his compliment.

"'A few can touch the magic string,
And noisy fame is proud to win them;
Alas, for those who never sing,
But die with all their music in them!'"

quoted Orlando, from her other side.

And he had the satisfaction of seeing that Miss Glendinning was struck by the lines. She asked where they came from.

Orlando referred her to 'The Autocrat of the Breakfast Table;' and Arthur inquired whether that was not the book which contained the wondrous history of the deacon's 'one-hoss shay.'

From the 'one-hoss shay' they diverged to American anecdotes in general; and Arthur's store was still unexhausted when they reached the waggonette. Mr. Oakes and the children reappeared. It could not be denied that the boots of all three were wet: and indeed, Mr. Oakes did not altogether repudiate the charge of having waded down the stream.

"But, then, look at my grass-wrack, Mary."

And he exhibited to his wife's inspection a straggling piece of vegetation, which looked not unlike an old and very limp

green ribbon whose edges had been torn into strips at various points.

Lady Mary restrained herself from saying more than "Ah, indeed," for she was a tolerant wife, but it can hardly be doubted that she thought within herself, "A pair of boots spoiled, and a fit of rheumatism incurred, for the sake of *that* thing!"

They rolled along, rapidly, through the quickly falling twilight. Soft clouds settled down upon the edges of the world; the shadows of the hedges lengthened into distinctness under the rising moon; the incessant click of the grasshoppers sounded from the fields on each side, and the perfume of the later hay hung, doubly strong in the soft air.

In crossing a pasture sadly overgrown with thistles, Miss Glendinning had paused to collect a large handful of their downy, seeding heads. Orlando ventured to inquire why she had gathered them.

She laughed and replied, "For an experiment."

"Miss Glendinning is going to grow them on flannel in saucers," said Arthur.

She smiled, mysteriously, and shook her head.

"I should be afraid to *grow* thistles. I should think I ought to be condemned by some saying just opposite to that about making two blades of grass grow, if I did."

When they reached the house, she went at once to the conservatory, her thistle-tops still in her hands, and added to them a little bunch of fern before she went upstairs with Miss Rendell.

Orlando thought them long in reappearing; he had arrived at a point when every moment seemed long, in which Elizabeth was out of sight. When at last the two girls came in, the purpose of the thistle-tops was clear enough. They wore each a crown made of the soft, white balls,

divided by tremulous ends of fern. Miss Rendell, who wore earrings, had even a downy globelet at each ear.

"How pretty!" exclaimed with one voice Lady Mary and the children.

"I think the experiment may be called a decided success, Miss Glendinning," said Arthur, admiring.

Orlando did not find it necessary to say anything, but his eyes returned to the white wreath again and again, as flies driven off return to honey.

"I thought, when I saw them, that they would be effective and inexpensive. How should you like a ball-dress trimmed with them, auntie?"

Before Orlando's eyes rose at once the image of a white-robed figure whose dress was looped with summer snow, and it appeared to him that a painter might well depict an angel in such a guise. Again it was his good fortune to sit by her at

table, for Lady Mary, having insisted so strongly upon the unceremonious character of the meal, would not permit any formal order of going to it, but took Miss Rendell by the hand, and led the way herself. Elizabeth had whispered to her aunt that Mr. Sherborne would sing if he were asked, and as soon as they had returned to the other room, Lady Mary obeyed the hint.

Orlando hoped that some one else would begin.

Lady Mary looked across towards Miss Rendell. But Miss Rendell was deep in a conversation with the devoted Mr. Wheelwright.

"Elizabeth!"

Elizabeth went to the piano, and Orlando, naturally, went to turn her pages. She played, however, without notes, and Orlando sat in a corner, listening, with his eyes upon her, entranced. She suffered the

last note fully to die away, then, turning a little upon the music-stool, asked whether he played his own accompaniments.

Alas, no; that was beyond him.

She showed him a pile of music belonging to her uncle and her cousin, and stood by while he made his choice. It appeared that the taste of Gilbert Oakes inclined towards ballads of the cavalier and restoration periods. Orlando wished, now, that his own studies had been more particularly directed to those of a lover-like turn. That which he perforce selected was by no means appropriate to his feelings. He reluctantly drew forth 'Shall I, wasting in despair— —'

"This is the only one I know. That's the worst of singing from another man's music. The song that is familiar to yourself is sure to be familiar to everybody else."

"That's rather an advantage to your

accompanyist," said Elizabeth, as she sat down.

The song was sung, and received with much applause.

Elizabeth, to whom the clear, full voice ringing beside her was a deep enjoyment, wished him to try again.

"Are you sure there isn't another you know?" she asked, wistfully. "*Could* not you try one that you don't know?"

Again Gilbert's songs were passed in review. At such a request, Orlando would have attempted all the music of an opera. And here was something which surely he would delight to sing — 'You meaner beauties of the night . . . What are you when the moon shall rise?'

Would Elizabeth play the air through to him? She played, and he leaned upon the piano, listening. Then they tried together. How delicious was it to follow the sounds from her fingers, to find her ready with

a helping note when he wavered, and to stand, of necessity, so close to her that her crown of thistle-down, more than once, touched his cheek! And when the song was at an end, she drew a long breath and said, "Thank you. You need not have been afraid to sing at sight."

Arthur had drawn near, and Lady Mary was entreating him to sing and to make his sister sing.

"Your French duets are so sweet. Everybody in Willingshurst talks about them."

"Do you know, I think sometimes that everybody in Willingshurst must be rather sick of them."

"Oh no! How can you think of such a thing? And that dear little refrain that runs in one's head so—how does it go? 'Rions, rions toujours.'"

So the French duets were sung, and the little refrain 'that runs in one's head so

ran in Orlando's all night. Then Ida and Maudie, who had been standing silently by the piano, began with one accord, "Oh, Miss Rendell."

"Well, Maudie?"

"Don't you want us to show you that dance that the Swedish gentleman taught to Gilbert?"

"Oh yes, please, I do. They say it is going to be fashionable. I have heard two or three people talking of it."

"May this table be put back, mamma? And would you mind playing the tune for us? You know how it goes—like this."—A simple and monotonous air beaten out with one finger.

Ida, meanwhile, was arranging the dancers.

"Look, Miss Rendell; would you dance with papa?—because he knows it. Are you going to try, Mr. Sherborne?" This a little shyly; for Orlando was still some-

what of a stranger, and Ida had an opinion that he was 'rather grand.'

"If I may, please."

"Then will you dance with Cousin Lizzie?—and she will show you. And, Mr. Rendell, will you have me, please? And then Maudie can take Mr. Wheelwright, and so there will be one in each couple who knows it."

"Do you mind accepting Ida's arrangement?" Orlando asked of Elizabeth.

"I shall be pleased."

They stood up, and came to take their places at the end of the line. Lady Mary took up the monotonous air at a brisk pace.

"You are the top, Lizzie," cried Maudie.

"Oh, are we? I didn't mean to be. But, come, Mr. Sherborne, we will do our best."

She held out her hand, and rather led him than was led by him down the figure, explaining the next procedure as they

went. The quick motion, the need of watchfulness upon her partner, gave her an alertness and promptitude which formed a new charm. For as a rule, her bearing was rather stately, her prevailing expression serious, and even her smile a little grave. But now she showed a simple joyousness, an unreflecting acceptance of a pleasant passing moment. Orlando almost dared to hope that she was happy as he was. The frank and easy friendliness of her tone to himself awakened no dread. How should he, seeming to himself to stand in the full summer of manhood, guess that he appeared to her a boy?

The dance was kept up until Lady Mary declared that she could bear the repetition of one short musical phrase no longer. It was suddenly discovered to be growing late. An interchange of 'good-nights' began.

"I am afraid this must be good-bye as

well as good-night," said Orlando; "for I am going on Friday morning."

"And you have not seen Gilbert," said Lady Mary.

His farewell of Elizabeth was not taken in the room, but by the door of the house. She had gone to fetch an additional wrap for Miss Rendell, and came running downstairs with a cloudily white shawl in her hands.

"Good-bye, then," she said, heartily. "I am so glad to have met you. You'll give my love to Millie?"

"Oh yes. Good-bye."

His hand lingered a moment under hers. He followed the others down the path, and glanced back in time to catch a last view of her as she stood on the doorstep, looking out with a smile at the moonlit beauty of the world. The thistle-down wreath looked like a halo of cloud, encircling a goddess of the moon.

At the gate Mr. Wheelwright parted from them, and Miss Rendell came to walk between her brother and Orlando.

"A very pleasant day," said she.

"Just a trifle slow," said Arthur.

Orlando expressed no opinion.

"How pretty Elizabeth Glendinning really is!" Miss Rendell observed, presently.

"She's more than pretty," said her brother; "she's regularly beautiful. I wonder whether she had tried that thistle-down stuff, before, and knew how well it suited her?"

At the first part of this speech Orlando smiled, remembering how nearly it coincided with his own words, uttered after seeing her in Shrubb's Wood; the second aroused his contemptuous but silent indignation.

"That little Ida will be awfully pretty when she grows up, and she'll just have

the liveliness that Miss Glendinning wants. Don't you think so, Sherborne ? "

Orlando would not confess that anything which was wanting in Miss Glendinning could be desirable, but it did not suit him exactly to proclaim this belief in her perfection.

He said evasively, therefore, " She will be very much like Miss Glendinning."

His mind dropped into the consideration of when he might see her again. Perhaps Millie might ask her to come and stay. How glorious if she could spend Christmas at Sherborne ! She was exactly the woman whom his father would prize highly.

And almost unawares, the French refrain sprang up again, and he heard his own voice singing, " Rions, rions toujours."

CHAPTER VI.

BETWEEN FATHER AND SON.

"Chaque famille est une histoire et même un poème pour qui sait la feuilleter."—*Lamartine.*

THE house towards which Orlando, two days later, was swiftly travelling, lay half a mile or so apart from the village of Sherborne. The surrounding country was flat, fertile, wooded; a lazy stream—the Sherril—lay in loops, like an unrolled ribbon, across the damply green marsh pastures. The village sloped up a mild ascent to the church, and faded gently away from it on the other side. This church was large and old; it was a little dilapidated, but had, at that time, still

escaped restoration. It possessed two stained windows of a mellow harmony of colouring which denies itself to modern emulation, and some quaintly sculptured tombs described in the county history as 'monuments belonging to the Sherborne, Lynn, and D'Aintrey families.' From the village the ground continued gradually to descend towards the dwelling of Orlando's father, known, rather indiscriminately, as 'The Lodge,' 'Sherborne Lodge,' or 'The Park.' Its owners, proudly careful to avoid pretension, used the first name. The thickly wooded hollow about the house was too small to be fitly called a park, but the name lingered from days when its extent had been greater. The house itself stood close among trees, and could only be viewed clearly from the front. Here it was open, divided, by a terrace and a strip of lawn, from the public footpath which ran across its grounds. The building was

Elizabethan, but among the stables and outhouses were relics of an older time. The entrance to the kitchen-garden, for instance, was through a stone archway which had once spanned a priory window. Behind ran, or rather lingered, the Sherril, and beyond that, rose a hill which was thought to be of partly artificial construction, and which, though of no great height, was looked on, in this flat country, with respect. It was clothed about half-way up with wood, and near its summit were the ruined fragments of Sherborne Castle. As the train brought him in sight of this hill, Orlando leaned forward and looked out eagerly. The midland scenery, rather homely than beautiful, had for him the charm of familiarity. Every field had a recollection belonging either to himself or to his ancestors. His very name was a growth of the place. He was quick to step forth when the train stopped. The

porter who got out his luggage knew him, and said, "Glad to see you back, sir."

As he stood, a hand came upon his arm. Turning quickly, he saw his father. A light came into both faces. The father's words were the same as the porter's had been, "Glad to see you back, my boy."

"How are you, father? I didn't think you would have come to meet me."

"I thought I might as well look in and see if you had come. Leave your traps here, and we will walk together. Thomas can come up in the evening."

They went off, arm-in-arm. The station-master, whose occupation had gone with the departing train, looked after them, and said to the master of the Station Hotel, "The old gentleman looks happy again now; he seems quite lost always when his son is away."

The father and son walked homeward between the familiar fields, talking the

pleasant, unimportant talk of local politics, of the year's successful harvest, of a new cow bought, and a hay-rick accidentally fired on a neighbour's land. Millie was at the vicarage, helping in the arrangements for a Sunday-school treat. She would be in soon.

They went into the house, and an intermediate meal was provided for Orlando. While this was in course of consumption Millie appeared. In cast of feature she resembled her father and brother, but she had a fairer tone of colouring, and a prevailing expression of dissatisfaction. The expression melted away as she welcomed her brother, and, laughing, drew her finger across a dark moustache, which had decidedly thickened since she saw him last.

"So you met Elizabeth Glendinning?" said she. "What did you think of her?"

"I thought her," Orlando cautiously

replied, "very handsome and very agreeable."

"Very handsome! That is mild praise."

"Very beautiful, then," said Orlando.

"And you saw her cousins too, I suppose? Nice people, are they not?"

"I saw two cousins—little girls. There is another, but he is away. Yes, I thought they were a nice family. Lady Mary is rather conversational, that's all."

"Lady Mary Oakes is that?" asked Mr. Sherborne. "I remember her before she was married. There were three sisters: Lady Ellen, Lady Mary, and Lady Elizabeth. The younger two were extremely pretty, Lady Elizabeth especially; I think I never saw a prettier woman. She and her husband used to be called Cupid and Psyche."

Orlando smiled quietly; the arrogance of youth was amused by the idea of such a nickname for the grey-whiskered Major,

whose one claim to interest consisted in being the father of Elizabeth.

Millie sat absently twisting the elastic of her hat, which she held in her hands; the dissatisfied look had come into her face again.

Mr. Sherborne was sitting, the day after this, in the library, sorting out various papers upon his writing-table. The drawer from which he had taken them stood half open; within were visible two miniatures, one enclosed in a morocco case, the other merely framed, and showing a likeness of Orlando as a boy. Another portrait, belonging to an earlier epoch, hung in the room, and drew the eyes of every new-comer. Those of its owner filled with a proud pleasure whenever they turned that way, for the picture proclaimed at once its twofold value—as a veritable Vandyke, and as the likeness of one of Orlando's kindred.

Presently a sound of hoofs came through

the open window. Mr. Sherborne deserted his papers, and went to look out. Orlando and Millie had been riding, and Orlando was at his sister's side, helping her to dismount. A bright September sun shone upon their fresh young faces. The light of exercise was in Millie's eyes; her fair hair was blown up, cloudily, round the edges of her hat; she laughed as she sprang down. The horses were led away, and the brother and sister came along the terrace to the entrance of the house. The father returned, smiling, to his papers. Steps and voices sounded within the house. Millie's light footfall, and the heavy trailing of her riding-habit, passed up the uncarpeted oak stairs. Orlando, after pausing to hang up his hat, came to the library. Mr. Sherborne looked up with an expectant smile on his careworn, gentle face. The lingering of the expectant expression until his son was close at hand might have sufficed alone to

show him short-sighted; a nervous trick of feeling after his double eyeglass, and twisting his fingers in its cord gave further confirmation.

Orlando came to the table. A few words were spoken of the ride; then his father, pulling a chair towards him, bade him sit down.

"If you have time, Orlando, I want to talk a little to you about business matters."

"Yes, father," said the young man, sitting down and becoming gravely attentive.

The Vandyke portrait looked out over his head from the wall behind. His father noted that the likeness was strengthening year by year. Just so would Orlando have looked if he had worn his hair in long locks, encased himself in a breastplate, and carried a flag wrapped round one arm.

He paused a moment, considering at which end he should begin his tale. A deeply unassuming quality in his nature

made him shy of laying bare, even to his son, the careful self-denial of his life.

"In the first place," he began, "there is your mother's money. We put off the discussion of that, you remember; but it is four months now since you came of age, and your uncle ought not to be troubled about it any more. Some of it is in shares in the North-Western; the rest is income from the Capton lands. I have written out the full particulars. There is the extract from your grandfather's will, too. It is about five hundred a year, at present, but if they take the line to Capton, the land will rise in value. Then there are the arrears of the three years since your grandfather's death. The two mortgages, of five hundred each, to Walsingham have just been paid off, so that the whole sum is intact. Of course, there is Walsingham's interest as well, for the two years, and the one year. The last five hundred, you see,

has been on deposit since January. Well, that is for that."

Orlando looked through the paper, and said, "Thank you. It seems all very clear and very satisfactory. The Capton lease is up next June, I see. I suppose Ripley will want to renew."

"I should not wonder if he wants to purchase. It would be a good thing to consult your uncle before doing anything decided there. He knows more about the place and its opportunities than we do. And, now, about other points which relate to Sherborne. I don't want you, Orlando, to be the typical crown-prince in opposition." This, with a little nervous, yet genuine smile, and a glance upward of appeal.

Quick came Orlando's warm reply, "No fear of that."

Mr. Sherborne, satisfied, continued. "My father was a better man of business than I

am. He did a great deal in many ways that I have never been equal to following. It was his ambition to make up for any losses and falling off that there may have been since the time when the Sherbornes were 'monarchs of all they surveyed.'"

Orlando's thoughts went to his grandfather's portrait, hanging in the dining-room.

"And in a great measure he might, perhaps, have succeeded, but for one unfortunate speculation. He fancied that there was a great opening on the Suffolk coast for a watering-place, at a place called Batteringbury Bay. A man of the name of Dale contrived to get into his confidence —a builder, who turned out, afterwards, to have been on the very verge of bankruptcy. He bought up a lot of land down there, and spent more money in building sea-defences, and having the whole town planned out, and then he began to build.

As he went on, he was obliged to borrow money on the land here. Before half the work was done, Dale came to grief, and nobody showed any inclination to try and finish the houses, or to live in those that were finished already. My father could not go on with it, and nobody else would; and there it stands. He never got over it."

He turned his eyes, sadly, upon a plan which he had partly unrolled, and which he held open before Orlando by the corners. It was marked, 'Plans of Sherborne-by-the-Sea, Suffolk, 1853.' Beneath stood written, in a shaken handwriting and faded ink, 'Sherborne's folly.' Orlando felt as if it were almost an irreverence in him, the descendant, to look upon the words of self-condemnation.

"All this," Mr. Sherborne pursued, letting the plan roll itself together again, "left us in a very straitened condition.

I thought it best when I came into possession here to sell the brook lands. I really had not the money to keep them on. It was a grief to me, but it could not well be helped. It was my great wish to leave everything unencumbered for you, when your time should come. And now there is not a penny owing ; I paid the last off in June."

In June, when Orlando had come of age.

"And so, my dear boy, we really may feel that we are free upon our own land again, and for the future, you will not need to be bound down to so quiet a life as we have been living, hitherto. I could not bear to think of your marriage being hampered by considerations of money."

A quick heat of gratitude stirred at Orlando's heart, as he recognized how much his father's care had smoothed his path towards Elizabeth. He looked up, but did not speak.

"It is rather early to look to that yet, but I am glad to think that you will be able to marry as soon as you choose."

("If she chooses," thought Orlando.)

"I should like to see your children about me before I die."

"Indeed, I hope you will," Orlando returned, heartily, his mind going to a momentary picture, in vague outline, of his future home.

"You would never leave this place, Orlando, would you?"

"Father!"

"I don't want you to bind yourself not to give it up, but I should like to think of there being Sherbornes here always."

Orlando looked affectionately round the room, and shook his head. "You don't think I would, do you? After three hundred years!"

"That's right. I was pretty sure you felt so. But it is a dull home, Orlando,

for you and Millie; and I think, sometimes, that Millie would be glad to be away from it."

"Perhaps we are not as good companions for Millie as we ought to be. Perhaps she feels having no woman about her," said Orlando. And he thought of the pleasure and comfort which it would be to Millie if Elizabeth were here as his wife. Once more, his mind saw her spending her Christmas here as a guest. "To me it is the dearest place in the world," he declared, waking out of his meditations with a smile. "I don't say that I may not wish to be in London sometimes—but that's different." Different, indeed, since did not Elizabeth live there?

"There's one thing," said Mr. Sherborne, looking down, and turning backwards and forwards the key of his drawer in the lock, "which I wished for very much, when I was a younger man, but it had to

be put aside. I should have liked to be in Parliament."

"It is not too late. Why not now?" said Orlando, his face lightening at the thought of a pleasure to be given to his father.

The father, smiling sadly, shook his head. "Not now, Orlando. Perhaps you may fulfil that dream, as well as a good many others."

Then, drawing together such papers as were not to pass to Orlando's keeping, he laid them again in the drawer, and closing it, finally turned the key. He looked up with a sigh, like one who locks away a half of his life. The cares and anxieties which these represented had worn away all youthfulness from him, had robbed his nights of sleep and his days of pleasure, but now that they were dead and buried, his occupation had gone with them, and he felt a blank—a displeasing sense of

void, an unnatural lightness, succeeding to the weight of an accustomed burden.

The eyes of father and son met. Neither spoke a word to indicate affection, but if Elizabeth had been there, she would have understood the truth of Orlando's declaration, that he had never felt the want of a brother.

CHAPTER VII.

A CHAPTER OF INTRODUCTIONS.

"Yesterday a student and to-day a lover."
Longfellow, 'The Spanish Student.'

SEPTEMBER and the long vacation closed together. Orlando went back to Cambridge, resolved to read none the less steadily on account of his love for Elizabeth. To say that he kept literally to such a resolution would be to say that his affection had died. There can be no doubt that the face of Miss Glendinning did obtrude itself even upon the hours which he meant to devote to work, and that it filled up almost entirely those other hours of leisure in which some thoughts of study

might, under ordinary circumstances, have lingered. On the other hand, her remembrance acted as a spur to the desire, hitherto rather kept lukewarm by duty than fired by zeal, of attaining a high place. And with how sweet a charm it filled those times of repose, in which he floated easily down the river, or loitered in the autumnal-tinted fields. He grew to reckon almost as a certainty the chance of seeing her at Christmas. His mind pleased itself with the idea of seeing her and his father together. But all these hopes were dashed by a letter from Millie, early in the term. It contained, among other gossip, this passage :—

"The Glendinnings are going to the south of France for the winter. Major Glendinning has been rather seriously ill, and they think the change may do him good. I saw Elizabeth for a few minutes the other day in the park." (Millie was

staying in London.) "She looked as beautiful as ever. Her cousin was with her. I can't quite make out their attitude to one another—whether just growing up together *could* make a man indifferent to such looks as hers. What do you think? Elizabeth desired to be remembered to you. So did Lady Mary Oakes, who seems to have been very much taken with you. What a nice, kind woman she is!"

Poor Orlando! Could any letter have been devised more cunningly full of nettle-stings? He pondered each word, labouring, with the zeal of a commentator, to assign its exact share of significance to each. Yet it failed to strike him that Millie's interest in the question was rather correlative than co-ordinate to his own, and that for her the point to be determined was not Elizabeth's, but Gilbert's feeling.

For some days after the receipt of this

letter, he found himself a prey to the most unwonted despondency. The months were so many until the spring. And who could tell what chances they might hold concealed? But by slow degrees, the months wore themselves away. The urgent question of examinations threw all else, for a time, into the background. As Easter approached, however, and he found himself occupying a place—not a very high one—on a classical honours list, there remained nothing further to distract his thoughts. The Glendinnings, he had heard, were coming back to town in the end of April. He was fully resolved not to be long behind them. The last six months had developed in him an affection for London, not previously observed. His father and sister supposed it a natural growth. Neither of them had remarked its coincidence with his first sight of Miss Glendinning. Nor could they know with what

invariable regularity his London walks included a quiet West-end street of small intrinsic interest, where his pace would slacken, and his eyes fix themselves upon certain first-floor windows.

Now, when he was released from college, and when the season was about beginning, what more natural than that he should desire relaxation and change? His father was glad of the wish. The two steps which he next hoped for his son would both be best advanced by his mixing in wider circles of society than Sherborne could afford. In Sherborne there was no young woman whom he thought good enough to become Orlando's wife. His idea of that 'not impossible she' was almost as exalted as the young man's own had been, when he fashioned her image in Shrubb's Wood, before he had yet seen Elizabeth Glendinning. And now he was to see Elizabeth again—to meet her,

perhaps, often—to win her, his thoughts whispered.

He had a lodging in Jermyn Street. His tastes would have inclined to the more classic and memory-haunted region of the Temple; but, then, the street in which he liked to wander would have been a good mile farther away, and he could not have suggested to himself that it made his nearest way home from anywhere.

Major Glendinning and his daughter occupied the upper part of a house in Burlington Street. Its lower rooms were tenanted by a firm of music-publishers, and a neat, gilded effigy of a harp was placed between the front windows. Orlando had looked at this harp, some scores of times, from the opposite side of the street; to-day he viewed it in profile, from the uppermost step of that flight which led to Major Glendinning's door. The door was opened to him by a grey-haired man of soldierly bearing.

The Major was gone out.

Was Miss Glendinning out, too?

He believed not. Would Orlando walk this way?

Orlando followed, and was ushered into a little room on a half-landing. It had no door, and was divided from the staircase by a curtain—a fashion less common at that time than now. The window was painted, probably to hide a view of blank wall. Orlando felt as if he were the Sleeping Beauty's prince, standing in an antechamber of her castle. An oval mirror, in a carved frame, hung against the wall. He glanced at his reflection, pleased to look where she had looked.

The man, reappearing, repeated his formula, "Will you walk this way, sir, if you please?"

They went up a few stairs; a door which faced them was thrown open, and Orlando went into the room, at whose windows he

had so often looked with longing, from outside. Miss Glendinning was here, and was alone. She had been writing. Her wet pen lay against the open inkstand of her Davenport, but she had drawn a sheet of blotting-paper over her letter.

She met him with a smile, saying, "Mr. Sherborne! This is quite a surprise. I had no idea you were in town."

"I came up yesterday," said Orlando.

She received the idea that he was going home almost immediately.

"It was very kind of you to come and see us. I am so sorry that papa is out. How long do you stay?"

"I hardly know; there is no time fixed. Some weeks."

"Oh; then you must let us see a good deal of you. Is Millie with you?"

Her mind had gone to Gilbert. Orlando, dimly perceiving that something lay behind the question, had a momentary thrill of

hope that she thought of Millie as a link between herself and him.

"No, she is at home."

"I should like to have seen her. I caught just a glimpse of her in the autumn. How is she? I didn't think her looking very well."

"I don't think she seems very well. She says she is, but she looks pale, and she always seems to start when you speak to her. I think she rather mopes."

Elizabeth was looking down. It seemed improbable that she should smile at this description of her friend's state, yet the lines of her face certainly looked like those of a suppressed smile.

"She has not much society at Sherborne, you see," Orlando went on. Then, with a slight trembling of the voice, very perceptible to himself, but unobserved by her, and with a tinge of colour fluttering on his face, "It would be a real kindness if you

would come and keep her company for a little while—some time."

"I should like to come very much," said Elizabeth, speaking cordially, and looking at him with straightforward, friendly eyes.

Orlando, in this clear afternoon light, solved the question concerning their colour which he had been putting vainly to himself through all these months. They were grey—a clear, dark grey, equally deep and transparent. Calling himself back from this discovery, he found her remarking that she and her father had only been home about a fortnight from abroad. He hastened to hope that her father was the better for having been away.

"Oh yes, much better. I am so glad we persuaded him to go."

"You have been at Nice, have you not?"

"Yes, and at Cannes. It has been very enjoyable; but one is glad to get home again."

He noticed that she was looking very well. Her cheek had a slightly deeper tint, a slightly fuller curve. Her seriousness seemed to border upon cheerful equability.

"Is Lady Mary very well, and your cousins?"

"Oh yes;—the children are going to school. I am afraid aunt will miss them very much. They are all at home, at Willingshurst. But my cousin Gilbert is up here, staying with another aunt. I hope you will see him this time. I want you to like him—very particularly."

She uttered the last words a little doubtfully, and then looked up inquiringly; but Orlando did not meet her eyes. She saw a look of displeasure in his face. Was he so selfish a brother, she asked herself, that he was jealous of his sister's lover? She had heard that brothers not rarely were so.

"Disagreeable lad," was her mental com-

ment. In the next moment, she began to be sorry for him. After all, it might well be something of a shock, when a man had but one sister, to think of losing her. For marriage was, in a certain sense, a division. It would have been unbrotherly, perhaps, to feel nothing. And as she really desired to think well of Orlando, she was glad to be able to take this view. She resolved to change the subject, but circumstance, intervening, did it for her. The door of the room was thrown open, and the soldierly man admitted, without announcing, a tall and stately old lady. She bestowed a rapid but searching glance upon Orlando as she crossed the room. Elizabeth rose and went to her.

"How are you to-day, auntie?" she asked, in a louder and higher key than seemed altogether respectful.

"Very well, child, thank you; but I am always that, I am thankful to say. It is

the young people, nowadays, who don't know what it is to be well."

She spoke in the low, too evenly running speech of one who failed to distinguish clearly her own tones.

"Where's your father?" she next asked.

"He is gone out, auntie—to his tailor's, I believe."

"Ah—m!" said the old lady.

The meaning of this utterance was not precisely determinable, but it did not appear to denote entire approval.

Elizabeth introduced Orlando. The lady was, as he had already concluded, her aunt, Lady Ellen Darling.

She had a moment's difficulty in catching his name. His card was lying on the table, and he quickly turned it towards her.

"Orlando Sherborne. Why, surely! One of the Sherbornes of Sherborne?"

Orlando said "Yes," and accompanied

the word by a slight motion of the head, which should make his assent visible as well as audible.

She motioned him to sit down near her.

"I remember your father, and your grandfather. Was it not your grandfather who thought he could turn Batteringbury Bay into a fashionable bathing-place?"

Orlando acknowledged his grandfather's folly.

The old lady gazed at him critically and remarked, "You are very much like your father." ("But a finer face," she added, in repeating this observation to Elizabeth when he was gone). "And are you staying here for long?"

He replied as before.

"I hope I shall have the pleasure of seeing you sometimes. I am 'at home' every alternate Tuesday. Will you kindly give me your address, and I will

send you a card, so that you can have no excuse for forgetting."

Orlando wrote down his address, and Elizabeth, while he did so, asked, "What have you done with Gilbert, auntie?"

"He was to meet me here. I was going to take you for a drive. Thank you, Mr. Sherborne. Will you take charge of that, Elizabeth, and send Mr. Sherborne a card?" Then, turning to Orlando, "I always make my nephews and nieces write my invitations. You see, I am too deaf to save my eyes by making them read to me, and I must take care of my eyes to fill the place of my ears—though I hear a good deal more than many people think."

Orlando, taking note of her quick eyes and general air of alert watchfulness, thought it extremely probable.

"Here is Gilbert," said Elizabeth, from the window.

Orlando's eyes turned, curiously, towards

the opening door. The young man to whom it gave admittance was built, like his father, upon a rather large scale, and, like him, had no point of special individuality in his appearance. He was of the stuff of which a good man of business, a good country gentleman, or a good county member, might be made. If it had been necessary to describe him by three adjectives, they might have stood thus: manly, gentlemanly, sensible. The two young men were made known to each other, and each looked at the other with a specially interested underthought, while Elizabeth, who thought she understood their thoughts, kept a specially interested watch upon both of them.

The first glance of inquiry left Orlando still suspicious that in Gilbert he had a rival, but unable to seize any point upon which to hang a personal dislike. All the more was he likely to be a rival. But

Gilbert, finding in Orlando's face a reminder of his sister's, and hearing in his words a deeper echo of her voice, felt at once that disposition towards friendship with which brothers of the beloved object may be observed to inspire a lover still uncertain of her own favour.

"I am glad we have met at last," he said in a cordial way. "It seemed as if we were always to play the parts of the little man and woman in a child's weather-glass. I left Trinity your first term, you know, and then, when you came to Willingshurst, I was in Norway."

"And when you were here, in the autumn, Mr. Sherborne had gone back to Cambridge," said Elizabeth.

"By-the-by, Mr. Sherborne, is your sister here with you?" asked Lady Ellen, abruptly.

If Orlando's observing faculties had not been engaged in hunting on a false track,

he could scarcely have failed to see with what eagerness Gilbert awaited his reply. But the doctrine, so readily acknowledged in theory, of the impossibility of understanding our neighbour's thoughts except by putting ourself at his point of view, is too often translated, in practice, into setting him at ours. A child cannot believe that its elders are in their hearts indifferent to toys, and its elders often enough, in spite of memory, evince an equal unbelief in their value to the child. A kindred blindness closes the eyes of a brother to the likelihood that his sister may be fallen in love with.

Orlando, as he answered "No," had no suspicion that he was destroying a whole fabric of Gilbert's hopes, or that Elizabeth's gentle "It is a pity," covered more than a polite surface meaning. Lady Ellen, deaf as she was, or perhaps because she was deaf, had a far clearer notion of their game of

cross-purposes, and was inclined to watch out its continuation. Turning to Orlando, she invited him to join their drive. He declined, reluctantly, on the ground that he was engaged to see his uncle, who was a busy barrister, and had with difficulty set apart an hour for him.

He rose to go, and both ladies repeated their hopes of seeing more of him, Elizabeth adding that her father would be sorry to have missed him. And when he was gone, Lady Ellen expressed her opinion that he was an extremely well mannered and unassuming young gentleman. Elizabeth, smiling, nodded, and said that was exactly her opinion too.

Not only does one man at various times of life play many parts, but he plays, at the same time, many parts upon many different stages. The multifarious worlds of a great town are not divided by any strict boundaries. We may pass from one

to another three or four times in a day. Nothing is stranger to ourselves than the knowledge that we have breathed different atmospheres, the sense of altered indications taking place in the soul's barometer. This is the explanation of the widely differing judgments pronounced on the same man. In one atmosphere, the mercury of his soul shrinks back upon itself, and the hand which follows its guidance gives a warning of ungenial weather. But the barometer is not, therefore, a mere augur of storm. It has its 'Set fair' too, but its nature forbids it to rise here. Carry it into another room, and you shall find it cordial enough.

Orlando, in passing from Burlington Street to his uncle's chambers, felt like an actor whose part was changed from Romeo to Laertes. His uncle, Mr. Pelham, was a lean and sallow-visaged man, having that external likeness to an elderly bird of prey

which, by some mysterious affinity, often associates itself to legal eminence. Uncle and nephew consulted together in great detail concerning the Capton leases and the investment of certain moneys, and as they talked, each kept a little reserve of attention busy upon the other. Orlando, on the former principle of judging his neighbour by himself, bestowed a good deal of uncalled-for commiseration upon his uncle's lonely lot. Mr. Pelham himself considered his lot an enviable one, seeing that he held a distinguished position in a profession whose excitements and emoluments were very dear to him, and that he had every prospect of by-and-by becoming a judge. He, on his side, watched Orlando quietly, and confirmed the opinions which he had long held of him. When the business discussion had been brought to an end, he entered upon advice of a more general and personal character—"encour-

aged," as he expressed it, "by the recollection that Orlando, having no other uncle and no aunt, could not have been called upon to submit to it from any other quarter."

This prelude was, perhaps, hardly required in addressing Orlando, of whom an old groom had once said, with justice, that he was a "very advisable young gentleman."

His uncle proceeded to say that he was glad to see him in London. "There are two extremes, Orlando, which I should particularly warn you to avoid. The one is that of confining yourself exclusively to Sherborne. A country gentleman who has no interests beyond the circle of half a county may be a very useful member of society, but he hardly retains that intellectual level upon which one would desire to stand. Your father, I admit, is an exception, but I am sure you must feel with me that his knowledge and powers have been

somewhat wasted in so retired a sphere. But, putting your father out of court, what is the ordinary standard of country cultivation? Can anything be more depressing than the conversation to be met with at the dinner-tables of what is called county society?"

"But——" began Orlando.

His uncle lifted his hand in a deprecating way, as who should say, "I have not finished my address to the jury."

"On the other hand, the owner, or prospective owner, of estates and position in the country, does ill to live among interests entirely removed from those of the local sphere to which his possessions belong. And then, one other point. It is, I know, quite in vain to advise any man, and especially a young man, upon the subject of marriage. Still, one may take precautions beforehand, by choice of society. You would do well, Orlando, to frequent as

far as possible the society of women of wide and cultivated interests, such as you would be more likely to meet in London than at Sherborne. You may think that an old bachelor like myself is not the best judge of such matters; but it is an old remark, that inaction is often the result of too keen a judgment. Moreover, a knowledge founded upon many observations, though each by itself may be shallow, is of more general reliability than that which is derived from a single instance of personal experience. A married man cannot judge of matrimony; he can only judge of his own marriage. Your temper, Orlando, appears to me particularly affectionate, and you have not a wide range of relations or of friends, in whom you might find compensation for uncongeniality in a wife. I suspect that your happiness would be almost as much dependent as a woman's upon the harmony of your relations in

marriage. I will say no more upon that point, except, indeed, this: that the option of not marrying at all, which you might propose to me, and perhaps justify by my own example, is inappropriate to your case, as the last representative of an old name which you would not, I think, be willing to let die."

He ceased, and an expression came into his face of awaiting a similar speech in reply.

"No, indeed," Orlando answered, fervently. "And I hope, uncle, when I do marry, that it will be exactly such a woman as you describe."

The happy, boyish manner and mellow, eager voice were in odd contrast with the dry, literary precision of the uncle, who spoke as one mindful of shorthand reporters, and studious to consult their convenience by careful and measured utterance. How far Elizabeth Glendinning did

indeed fulfil the ideal existing in Mr. Pelham's mind might, perhaps, be open to question, but Orlando's affection had not reached the stage in which doubts begin to arise of the loved one's perfection.

He left his uncle's chambers, and returned through the busy streets in a condition of happy vision, which made them as golden as ever they were to the hopes of Dick Whittington. The April sunshine was at its brightest; green specks tipped the black twigs of the trees in the Temple Gardens; and Orlando, lingering to glance at them, thought of all the love tales which clustered round this place, and of his own boyish fancy that the Tower had been the prison of Palamon and Arcite, whence, in days when London was less built over, they had looked upon Emelie walking in this garden.

CHAPTER VIII.

CHIEFLY IN DIALOGUE.

"Life has its May, and all is mirthful then."

Scott.

ORLANDO'S next meeting with Elizabeth was at a dance. He had thought it likely he might see her here, and watched the door till she appeared. She was with Lady Ellen. Gilbert was following, and a second young lady was of the party. Again her beauty, seen, he thought, to greater advantage than ever in this dress, came home to him with something like a shock. He made his way at once towards her; but before he could reach her, a young man was at her side, and her little

motion of the head and smile made him sure that she had promised to dance with him. As Orlando came up, the pair moved off, and in another moment were among the dancers. Lady Ellen smiled upon him, and introduced him to "my young friend, Miss Tenby."

Miss Tenby was a fair, shy little girl, who, when he asked her to dance, replied with a mingling of bashfulness and gratitude. She danced, however, very well, though a little over-precisely, as if she were still new from school dancing-lessons. Her shyness was not very deeply rooted. The air of quiet dignity—quite unconsciously worn and natural—which, even in these younger days, belonged to Orlando, soon lost its awfulness, and when once she understood that her partner was rather inclined to be deferential than condescending, she became decidedly talkative.

Orlando asked her whether she was staying with Lady Ellen Darling.

"Oh no; only I live next door to her in Portland Place, and she was kind enough to bring me. Mamma is an invalid, and she can hardly go out at all. Lady Ellen is *so* kind; isn't she?"

"I am sure she is, though I hardly know her enough to have a right to say so."

"Oh, don't you?" said Miss Tenby; and for a moment she was silent, as if her faith in him had been shaken.

"I don't live in London, you see," said Orlando.

"Oh, don't you?" said she again; and then, "Don't you like London?"

"Very much indeed."

"So do I. I am so sorry to think the season should ever be over."

"You have a good deal of it still to look forward to," said Orlando, by way of consolation.

"Oh yes; and I hope I shall go out a great deal. A cousin of mine went to fifty dances in one season."

"Really?"

"Yes; besides other things, you know. Do you know Miss Glendinning?"

"Yes, I know her a little."

"Oh, isn't she beautiful! I always think she looks so very nice when she is dancing with Mr. O'Brien."

"Is that Mr. O'Brien, then?"

"Yes; Mr. Lawrence O'Brien, you know. Don't you know him?"

"No, I don't."

"Oh, you are sure to, if you stay in London long, and if you go to Lady Ellen's 'at homes.' Shall you, do you think?"

"I hope so."

"I don't care much about 'at homes.' They are not half as good as dances, I think; but I like Lady Ellen's better than

other people's. For one thing, I am so near home. I always feel that I could go home just whenever I felt tired. Isn't it funny? you know, Miss Glendinning is our landlord."

"Your landlord!".

"Yes; the house we live in belongs to her. It was her mother's, just as the next house is Lady Ellen's; only she and her father don't live in it. I suppose it would be too large for them."

The dance came to an end; Orlando took back his partner to Lady Ellen. By her was standing Elizabeth, who met him with a smile of unmistakable welcome.

"I am so pleased to see you here, Mr. Sherborne. I wondered whether I should. By-the-by, is it possible that I saw Mr. Arthur Rendell in Regent Street, or was it only some one very much like him?"

Orlando hardly knew how he answered, that Arthur had gone back to college.

The evident eagerness with which she turned to him was intoxicating. The young Irishman perceived it as clearly as himself; Orlando could see the angry reddening of his face as he stood by. Her consent to dance with him was given, too, with surely an almost eager readiness.

In this interval a man of peculiarly smooth and self-possessed manner added himself to the group, and quietly wished Elizabeth "Good evening."

She answered in the same tone, and he went on to speak to Lady Ellen, then to Miss Tenby, and afterwards to Mr. O'Brien. A little later in the evening he was made known to Orlando as Captain Grove.

He observed that while Elizabeth was dancing with himself, both Gilbert and O'Brien were standing lonely, and doubtless envying his better fortune.

"This is not the first time we have

danced together, is it?" said Elizabeth. "I wonder whether you remember the figures of that Swedish dance?"

"I wish you would try me, under the same conditions as before."

"That would include Willingshurst, and a picnic beforehand. You know Miss Rendell is married?"

"Oh yes. Arthur brought down wedding cake to Trinity, and half the men dreamed upon it."

"Dear me! I thought that was quite a school-girl's trick. I should not have expected to find it indulged in by what Maudie calls 'collywegians.' I hope the dreams were satisfactory."

"Mine were."

Elizabeth did not inquire into further details, but said, after a moment, "I was glad to see you dancing with Miss Tenby. It would be kind if you would ask her again, for she does not know many people,

and it feels horrid to a young girl like that to have to sit out. I would not say that to everybody, because most young men are so frightfully conceited; but I don't think you will imagine yourself very magnificent because you are asked to do a small kindness."

"Thank you," said Orlando, very fervently, and in his inexperience he thought her open praise encouraging.

This was not the only dance in which he was fortunate enough to be her partner; and the evening was recorded in his memory as a golden time. Yet there were shadows on the gold. The frank, easy—in truth, sisterly—footing on which she stood to Gilbert, caused him very uneasy doubts. So did the unmistakable devotion of the young Irishman, to whom Miss Tenby had called his attention. On the other hand, Elizabeth did certainly treat himself with especial favour. Her

aunt and cousin, also, seemed to single him out for particular friendliness.

The next point upon which his anticipation rested was that 'at home' of Lady Ellen's. He had the good fortune to meet Elizabeth several times in the few days which divided it from this dance. He called, and this time saw her father also. Major Glendinning was—as he always was—rather an elegant addition to the furniture of the room than an enlivening member of its society, but he smiled amiably and seemed mildly pleased. On this occasion Captain Grove was present. Orlando learned incidentally, and without paying much attention to the matter, that he was in the War Office, but that, this being Saturday afternoon, he was free from his duties. The foreground of Orlando's fears was so much filled up by the figures of Gilbert and Lawrence, that Captain Grove—a later appearance and an elder man—was almost

entirely eclipsed. His smooth manner, too, which was alike to every one, was by no means that of a lover. Orlando went home on that Saturday afternoon with more sober certainty of hope than he had ever before dared to allow himself. How, if he could have heard the conversation which took place between Elizabeth and Captain Grove, within half an hour of his leaving?

"You have not seen your uncle yet, Edward?"

"No; I hope to do so very soon. Are you so anxious to have our engagement known?"

"I am, rather. It sounds vain, perhaps, but I should like to let Mr. O'Brien know that it is no use to go on thinking about me."

"For Heaven's sake, Elizabeth, don't tell *him*. You might as well advertise in the *Times*."

"Is he that kind of man? I should not have thought it."

"He is an Irishman," said Captain Grove, evasively. As Elizabeth did not speak, he went on. "It is no use to give him a hint. He will never be satisfied till you have said 'no' to him in plain words."

"Oh, do you think so? How very disagreeable!"

"I thought women rather liked the triumph."

"Perhaps some of them do, as some men like to kill things. I don't. I wish people would understand. I don't encourage him; now, do I?"

"A man of that kind doesn't need encouragement, and won't understand discouragement. It is not your fault; you can't help being the prettiest woman in London."

"I suppose I can't help it;" and, as he

laughed, "I don't mean being the prettiest woman in London—of course, I know I'm not—I mean, I can't help Mr. O'Brien caring about me, if he will."

"Of course you can't; you must just submit to your fate, and be satisfied to know that ninety-nine women in a hundred would give their souls to change places. The only alternative is to spoil your good looks, and that *I* say 'no' to."

The society of this, her favoured lover, always brought a look of doubt and question into Elizabeth's eyes, at other times so calm and clear.

"I wonder," she said, "how much you will care for me when I am old and grey, and my good looks are gone?"

There was a pause, too short to be measured. Captain Grove could not help feeling that the question struck home. But to her, he answered, "Why, I shall be old too, and grey, long before you are; and, as to good looks, I have none to lose."

She looked at him, and felt sure that no age could destroy his air of distinction. Then, returning to the old point, somewhat in Lady Mary's fashion, "And you will really see your uncle soon?"

"Yes; I think he will be up in town, and then he will see you. Half an hour in your company would do more than weeks of description. And now, good-bye. I am afraid I shall not see you again till Tuesday, for I am going to dinner to-morrow at Ellison's."

"You won't fail at Aunt Ellen's on Tuesday, will you?"

"No, indeed. I believe you suspect it is not a pleasure to me to be where you are."

"No, I don't. And oh, Edward, one thing: I want you to be very nice to Mr. Sherborne, for Gilbert's sake, and because he really is nice, himself, besides."

"I hope I am always 'very nice.' I'll do

what I can, but I have not much taste for boys. I would advise you, if you really like him, not to be too friendly with him, yourself. It is rather false kindness from a woman as attractive as you."

"Oh, you think that everybody sees me with your eyes. Why, I am ever so much older than he is; he really is not much more than a boy."

"I should fancy you were born in about the same year. Well, I dare say you know best, and at the worst, a man soon gets over that sort of thing. Good-bye, Lily-of-the-valley."

"H'm. I don't know that I quite like that name. It is very appropriate, just now; but, as the year goes on, there won't be any more lilies-of-the-valley, and then very likely you'll call me Tiger-lily instead."

"Elizabeth is the prettiest name of all; and so good-bye, my very own Elizabeth."

Thus amicably the lovers parted, and

Captain Grove walked home, the better pleased with his engagement that he believed two men would have envied him if they had known it.

CHAPTER IX.

ACADEMICAL.

"Oh, years may come, and years may bring
The truth that is not bliss;
But will they bring another thing
That can compare with this?"

A. H. Clough.

On the afternoon of Lady Ellen's 'at home,' Orlando, running upstairs at his lodgings, was met by a young man coming down. He stepped hastily aside, for the new-comer's rate of progress and the many articles with which he was laden made collision very undesirable.

"Hallo!" cried the stranger, pausing, but not until the impetus of his descent had carried him to a step or two below. "Why, it's Sherborne!"

Orlando, looking at him with more attention, exclaimed, "Duncannon!" and they shook hands, Mr. Duncannon shifting a paint-box from his right hand to his left to enable him to do so.

He was a fair young man, taller than Orlando, and of that loosely hung and large-jointed construction which makes up in strength for what is wanting in grace. His clothes partook of the same character, and rather hung upon him than fitted him. At a cursory glance he looked almost boyish, in spite of a short, curling beard just circling his chin. A pair of peculiarly bright and quick eyes scarcely left you leisure to remark the other components of the face. But when—which was not often—the face was at rest, a horizontal line might be observed, marking itself with growing distinctness across his forehead, and his hair, worn rather long behind, was beginning to withdraw itself a little from the temples.

"Are you living here?" asked Orlando, with a pleased smile. Indeed, the meeting seemed to give satisfaction to both.

"Rather not; I am getting on, but I have not quite come to that yet. Remember, I have to keep up a studio. Newman Street is my shop."

"Well, I do live here for the present. Come in, if you are not in a hurry, will you?"

"Thanks, just for five minutes."

They went into Orlando's room.

"Rather different surroundings these, from those in which we saw each other last," said Mr. Duncannon.

"Jermyn Street instead of Snowdon—though, to be very particular, our last parting was at Paddington. And how have you been ever since?"

"Oh, 'as the indifferent children of the earth.' By-the-by, I congratulate you."

Orlando started and turned red. "What upon?"

"Didn't I see your name half-way up a column of university intelligence?"

"Oh, yes. Thank you. And didn't I see yours in the Academy catalogue?"

"I dare say you did. I had a thing—hung in a very decent place, too. I have a full conviction that it was only because my frame happened to fit the hole."

"Have you anything, this year?"

"Two portraits, and a little Welsh landscape that I did that summer when I was with you. I am painting an old man in the room above this, now; that is how I came to be here. I never knew such a wandering, restless fellow as he is. He has been going to sit to me any time these two years, but he has never had a long enough time disengaged until now, when he is held fast by an attack of rheumatism in the leg. I said to him it was not a

good time to have his portrait painted, but he advised me to take him while I could, and I thought, perhaps, I had better. He is first-rate company, except that he howls out now and then when the pain seizes him. I wish I had seen all the foreign places that he has."

"That is the old cry. Your heart is as much set upon Rome as ever, then?"

"Oh yes; what is an artist worth that hasn't been there? And I am beginning to see my way to it, too."

"I am very glad to hear it. I always told you you would succeed."

"I can pay my way comfortably, with out too much calculation; that's as much as I look for yet, and as much as a single man ought to want."

"Unless, indeed, he wants a wife," said Orlando.

"He mustn't want what he can't afford," Duncannon answered. "And now about

you: you are not here for good and all, are you?"

"Oh no; only till I get tired of it, or take a fancy for green fields again."

"Enjoying the world, I take it, as a gentleman at large?"

"Something of that kind."

"A very useless, dangerous, and unproductive employment."

Orlando broke into a smile.

"What are you going to do this evening?"

"Going to an 'at home' at Lady Ellen Darling's."

"There's a waste of time! You'll stand two or three hours in a suffocating atmosphere, and say things, not worth saying, to people you never saw before, and don't ever wish to see again."

Orlando laughed quietly.

"And if you do find a seat by a pleasant companion you will have to give it up to

some old woman who won't say 'thank you.' If you were a rising artist, now, and had to make yourself known, there would be some sense in it. But as it is—— But I suppose you do it because you like it."

"That is exactly the reason. Everybody has not your taste for a hermitage, you know. I suppose you will retire to an artistic solitude, where you will meditate and smoke, with your feet on the hob, and your collar off?"

"Neat—but you're mistaken. There never was a more sociably disposed person than I am. That's why I hate what you call society, so much. As it happens, I am going to the theatre with two particularly charming girls and their mother; and I shall walk home with them, and there will be a very quiet supper, and a very intelligent discussion of the play, and perhaps the prettiest of the sisters will sing

over the tunes of the songs. And now I must go, for I must get something to eat at home, and wash my brushes; and it is not so very early. Don't you envy me?"

"Not a bit. When are you coming to paint this old man again?"

"Thursday, at three."

"Look in upon me when you come away. Share my lonely dinner, will you?"

"Thanks, I will. Don't come out; I know my way down by this time."

They shook hands, cordially, and Duncannon added, "On the whole, you know, it *is* pleasant to see you again."

"I am glad you think so, and I quite agree."

They nodded to each other, and Duncannon resumed the hurried descent which his recognition had interrupted.

Orlando, left alone, ate his solitary meal, and, soon after, proceeded, with much time and care, to dress for the evening. His

thoughts, which had travelled back to the Welsh wanderings in which he had first met Duncannon, turned again to the future—the immediate future, which was so full of promise. The invitation, filled up with his name by the hand of Elizabeth, lay before him, and roused fresh gladness every time it met his eyes. A nearer and sweeter past than that in Wales awoke his memories. Softly at first, but with a gradual unintentional *crescendo*, he began to sing the song which he had sung to her accompaniment. Linked to that arose the little French duet, with its 'Rions, rions toujours,' which, once stirred from oblivion, never failed to linger for days in the recollection. Well might Duncannon's rheumatic sitter on the second floor, finding himself possessed by a little French spirit which exhorted him to laugh, inquire whether the gentleman below was a professional singer, and whether his practisings were

likely to continue. At last the full-toned voice was silent, and the singer went away to Portland Place.

Orlando enjoyed, perhaps, less of Miss Glendinning's immediate society during that evening at her aunt's house than at any of his previous meetings with her, yet at no previous meeting had his love made so great and rapid an advance. He watched her reception of Lady Ellen's guests, and imagined her in the position of hostess at Sherborne. Her manner, he thought, was altogether perfect. She had none of the intolerable pretension of condescension, but a sweet, natural graciousness which never failed. To him, her charm was a thing individual, part of herself, as the perfume is part of the rose.

Captain Grove, who also was observing her, could have told precisely wherein it consisted. The peculiarity, he would have explained, lay simply in the fact that, being

a most beautiful woman, she never behaved as if her beauty counted for anything in her relations towards other people. Such a bearing, it appeared to Orlando, would be in complete harmony with the 'state and ancientry' of his own home. He set her figure in the framework of the dark wainscoting, and fancied her portrait, hanging as the crowning glory, in the family collection. He even knew the place where it should hang. From these pleasing dreams he was recalled by seeing Lawrence O'Brien at Elizabeth's elbow. He looked round for that other object of his suspicion, Gilbert. But Gilbert was not paying any attention to Elizabeth. It rather seemed his desire to cultivate the society of Orlando, to whom he presently came. And there was something so manly, simple, and straightforward about him—to say nothing of his having what our Elizabethan writers would call 'a peculiar gift in

a smile'—that Orlando found it quite impossible to keep up his prejudice against him. One hint of Millie would have sufficed to make them friends for ever; but Gilbert gave no such hint, and Orlando's mind was too full to receive it unless it was directly presented to him.

While they were still together, Lady Ellen came to bid her nephew sing. He went away obediently to the piano. Lady Ellen, taking his place, asked Orlando whether he had yet seen the Academy. (It was the first week in May, and picture gossip was going on all about them.)

He answered, "No, not yet."

"Will you come with us to-morrow morning? I always go early in the day—to see the pictures, not the bonnets. We shall be there soon after ten, if you care to meet us."

Orlando said "Thank you," and resolved to be at the entrance from the

moment that the hour of ten should strike. An old lady drawing near, he stood up to give her his place—not without an amused recollection of Duncannon's prophecy—and went towards the piano to be near Elizabeth when she rose from it. When she did so, O'Brien was still beside her. She turned from him to Orlando. There was a slight increase of colour on her cheek. Orlando was sure that this marked attention was annoying to her. When Lawrence struck into their talk she gave a quiet, polite reply, and, a moment after, begged him to warn Miss Tenby, who had a cold, that she was sitting in a draught. He went, reluctantly, and did not soon return.

"Such an evening as this must be very tiring for you," said Orlando.

"A little—but I like it. And the people are mixing very well, to-night. Captain Grove's being here makes a great difference."

Orlando, after that, observed Captain Grove with rather more attention, and saw that it did make a difference. The first principle of that polished gentleman's conduct was to leave a good impression of himself upon every person to whom he spoke. Long and careful pursuance of this principle had given him a kind of sovereignty in the circle to which he belonged. Many another girl besides Elizabeth would have accepted his wooing in the same spirit. Yet Captain Grove was by no means a very clever man, nor had he that stamp of goodness which may give personal influence to even a dull man. He was merely a living instance of Bacon's truism, that 'every man profiteth in that he most intendeth.' Captain Grove's intentions aimed no higher than a certain low ideal of society success. The winning of a woman infinitely more noble than himself was something by the way, and some-

thing which might possibly become, after a while, rather a weariness than a joy.

Naturally, these ideas did not present themselves to Orlando's mind. His thoughts but rested a moment upon Captain Grove, and then returned to Elizabeth.

"I wish we shone a little more in the musical line," said she. "I won't ask you to sing to-night, because, of course, you have no music; but if you would bring in something and try over, some morning before next time, it would be really kind."

"Oh, I should be pleased."

"Thank you very much. Gilbert is so lazy; he doesn't practise, though I offer to play as many accompaniments as he pleases."

"What a casting," thought Orlando, "of pearls before swine!"

This was about the limit of their conversation, for she espied a lady sitting

solitary in a corner, and went away to talk to her.

The next morning Orlando posted himself punctually near the top of the wide, Burlington House staircase. Before long he saw the group for which he was watching: Lady Ellen, tall and dignified, wearing a very impressive bonnet; Elizabeth, calm and graceful, simply dressed, rather adorning than adorned by what she wore; and Gilbert, whose manly form and face made a contrast to the slender beauty of his cousin, which was very becoming to both. Orlando met them as they passed through the turnstile, and was complimented on his punctuality. Lady Ellen, without any secondary motive, attached Gilbert to herself; it suited her to have a catalogue-bearer whom she might bid be silent, and who would not look for polite remarks from her. Thus Orlando was left to bliss and Miss Glendinning. His attention was so

much absorbed that he quite forgot to look out for Duncannon's pictures. But, presently, circumstances reminded him of his duty in this respect. They had joined company with Lady Ellen and Gilbert, and were sitting in the large room, resting and observing the swaying crowd of gazers.

"Do you see those two girls?" said Elizabeth. "I have been watching them for a long time. They look so nice, and seem so quiet and interested. I suppose that is their mother with them."

Orlando looked critically at the young ladies so pointed out. They were slim, graceful girls. One, the fairer, was decidedly pretty, with a sweet, rather melancholy face—a model for Ophelia or Margarete. The other, with less beauty, had a keener glance, a swifter play of feature, a promise of more humour lurking in eye and lip. The mother resembled both daughters, but her face had more

of settled meaning, and expressed a very pleasant combination of intelligence, benevolence, and good sense. While they were still under observation, a young man and a young woman joined them. The young woman was manifestly another and older sister; the man was Duncannon.

"Here comes a third sister, Lizzie," said Gilbert; "and, I should say, a lover."

"Why, I know him," said Orlando; "he is an artist. We travelled together in Wales, and I met him up here, yesterday, quite by chance. I must go and speak to him."

"Oh, do," said Elizabeth; "and find out, if you can, who those nice-looking girls are."

Orlando rose, and Duncannon at the same moment saw him and came towards him.

"You here? Well, what do you think of it?"

"Oh, I call it a good year," answered Orlando, to whom any pictures seen in such company would have appeared beautiful, but who would have been hard pushed to give a reasonable account of any one of them.

"Are you alone? That is the proper way to see pictures."

Orlando could not help laughing. "And you are with three ladies!"

"I? Oh, I am different. I have been here, more or less, ever since it opened. I can very well afford to act as guide to my friends for once. And there are people, though they are rare, with whom it is advantageous to go round a picture-gallery. My companions are of that kind."

"May I ask, are they the same young ladies with whom you were going to the theatre last night?"

"Yes, they are; and if you want to hear

more about them, I'll tell you when I see you to-morrow. But now I must go after them, for they are going into the next room where my two portraits are, and I would not miss their first remarks on any account."

He walked away quickly, and Orlando returned to his companions, smiling.

"Well, Mr. Sherborne, who are they?"

"I don't know, except that they are the same whom he spoke very highly of, yesterday, and that he values their art-criticism so highly that he would on no account lose their remarks upon his own work."

"I should say," said Gilbert, "that your friend, Mr.——"

"Duncannon."

"Had an attachment to one of those young ladies."

"Now, that is so like a man!" exclaimed Elizabeth. "You never can think people

can be friends without something of that sort."

"Well, Lizzie, and, as a general rule, they can't."

"I call it horrid to think like that. And you yourself are just a proof to the contrary. At least, I trust, Gilbert, that you *don't* suppose I have been nourishing a romantic passion for you, all these years?"

"Indeed I don't; but that is different."

"And how do you know that it isn't different with Mr. Duncannon, too? Very likely these girls are artists. They look as if they might be."

"And what do you know of the looks of lady-artists? If they are at all like male artists of the same age, they would not be half so neat and trimly got up. Just look at Mr. Sherborne's friend. I don't want to say anything rude about any friend of yours, Sherborne, but I could have told that he was an artist by his

boots, alone. Now, the boots of those ladies were as neat as your own, Lizzie."

"Of course ladies' boots are neat, and would be if they were fifty times artists. But come, let us go into the next room and look at Mr. Duncannon's pictures. Auntie is always talking of having my portrait painted; perhaps Mr. Duncannon may be an unappreciated genius, whom it would be a triumph to be painted by."

They went on, and Mr. Duncannon's portraits were found worthy of all praise, but not exactly suggestive of unappreciated genius. Later, in another room, they came upon a little Welsh landscape, which was more interesting, because Orlando knew the place, and could tell how and when it was sketched. They sat down before it. It was hung high, so that the crowd did not much impede their view; and Orlando began to talk of his days with the painter in Wales, and of Snowdon in a mist so

thick that they dared neither go forward nor back, but lay down in the shelter of a rock, and there waited half a day and a night, until the next sun rose clear over an endless outlook of valleys.

"A time spent together in that way, with the doubt whether we should live to come down again, was enough to make friends of us."

"Yes, indeed."

"We each promised to go to the other's people, if either should be lost, and we wrote upon a letter, in case neither should get away. It read so strangely afterwards."

"Yes, it must have done. Did you keep it?"

"I showed it to my father, and he kept it, because, as he said, it was meant for him. And then we talked. We told each other all about our plans and hopes. The night seemed long enough to have remem-

bered and repeated every thought we ever had."

"I can fancy you did not sleep."

"Indeed, we did. We slept a good many hours, and we both dreamed that we were at home. But you can think what a joy it was to see the sun coming up at last. I think I never was so cold as in that half-hour before the dawn. Afterwards, when we got down into the valley again, we could not help feeling that there was something absurd in the whole affair. Of course we were intensely thankful; but, somehow, it seemed such an anti-climax to come down and get dry clothes, and a hot breakfast, by an inn fire. And what a breakfast we ate! I heard the women of the house exclaiming over us in Welsh, and every one of them found a different excuse to come in and look at us."

"I don't wonder you like Mr. Duncannon's picture. Did he do it before that, or after?"

"Two days after. I caught a frightful cold, and wasn't up to walking. So he did that from a window, while I lay upon the hearthrug, wretched."

"I am glad to have seen it," said Elizabeth.

She lifted her eyes to it again, and Orlando had a wild hope that her interest in it might be a sign of love.

"It is not sold," said she; for this was in the days when a red star of honour still adorned the frames of favoured pictures.

And, in making this commonplace remark, she had no other than the commonplace thought which it directly expresses.

But to Orlando, her words at once suggested the scheme of buying the little picture and keeping his purchase secret until such time as she herself might see it hanging at Sherborne.

Gilbert, at this point, appeared with a

message from Lady Ellen that she thought it time to go home to luncheon, and hoped Mr. Sherborne would come with them.

Mr. Sherborne was naturally extremely willing. And after luncheon the four went into the shady Park Crescent Gardens, where they found Miss Tenby, reading under a tree, and where they sat, gossipping pleasantly, for nearly an hour. Then Elizabeth declared that she must go home, and Orlando asked leave to accompany her. As they walked together, the subject of songs arose, and she was earnest in desiring that he would fix a day to come and try some, to her aunt's piano, and to her own accompaniment. When he left her, at her own door, it was just past four; and they had been together since ten. What a day of memories!

In Bond Street, he passed Captain Grove, on his way from the War Office. It did not enter Orlando's mind to associate his return with Elizabeth's.

CHAPTER X.

IN FRIENDLY CONVERSATION.

"Two friends, and at that happy time of life
When every bird sings prophecies."

M. O. C.

ORLANDO and Duncannon were sitting together, the next evening, in Orlando's room. A pleasant aroma of newly smoked tobacco encircled them. Their talk was the talk of youth—personal, egotistical, fresh, frank, and flavoured with a delightfully unconscious arrogance. The subject of the three young ladies who had been with Duncannon at the Academy had not as yet been touched. At last, after a little interval of silence, he made a speech, which Orlando took to be a prelude.

"If ever I do any good in this world," he said, flinging away, with energetic emphasis, the end of his cigar, "it will be owing to a woman."

"'Et tu Brute?'" murmured Orlando. "I do believe," he continued, aloud, with the gravity of mature conviction, "that there is nothing like the love of a good woman for bringing out the best of a man."

Duncannon chuckled. "I didn't say she loved me. She didn't. She was full of a beneficent, large-hearted benevolence, and she bestowed some of it on me, who wanted it badly enough, Heaven knows."

Orlando continued to smoke, and awaited further communications.

"Should you like to know who it was?"

"I am a little curious."

"It was Mrs. Cash, then, the mother of those girls you saw yesterday; a widow with children almost as old as I am. She had known something—not very much—

of my people, and she happened to hear I was all alone up here in town, and pretty ill off, and—well, I *was* getting mixed up with rather a rowdy lot of fellows. What can a man do? You can't live altogether solitary. It gets to be like a bodily pain upon you to have some company, and laughing, and talking, about you. And a shabby, poor artist of a fellow isn't able to choose his own society. You must take what you can get. And oh, if you knew how I used to long for some place that was bright and clean, and just to be spoken to by a nice woman! And one day—I know I had been awfully wretched, thinking: what was the good of trying to do anything, when there was nobody to care whether I succeeded?—the girl came up, and said there was a lady waiting to see me, downstairs. Didn't I make haste to brush my hair straight and wash my hands?—and I flung a whole drawerful of things on the

floor, trying to find a clean collar. And in Mrs. Barton's old front parlour, there she was. Not pretty, you know, or grand; just a quietly dressed, middle-aged widow. But a lady, you know. And she said how she had heard I was here, and she knew how dull it was for a young man alone in London. She had come on purpose to ask me to come in, often, of an evening, to see her and her daughters. And she gave me her card with her address upon it, and made me promise to come in the next evening. I don't know what I said—I don't believe I half thanked her properly, and it was all so soon over—but when I got upstairs again, and had the card in my hand, I can't tell you the change that had come over everything. I set to work, and painted, and sang over my work like anything."

"And of course you went?"

"You may be very sure of that. They

live in Gower Street. I used always to think, till I knew them, that it was the dreariest street in London. It was a nasty, damp, November night, just the night to be wretched, if you had not something pleasant to look forward to. I was shown into the room where they were all sitting, Mrs. Cash and the four girls."

"Four?"

"Yes; there's a little one—Viola. It seemed quite a roomful to me, and I was awfully shy of them at first."

Orlando smiled to himself at the incongruous image of Duncannon overcome by bashfulness.

"But, in five minutes, they had set me at my ease. They were so simple, and friendly, and seemed so really glad to have me. And it wasn't as if I was as successful even as I am now. I had not done anything. If ever there was a 'detrimental,' I was one. And then they sang—two of

them sing together delightfully—and they talked about pictures; not just senseless gossip, but real intelligent appreciation. And they asked, but so nicely, whether I would let them see some of my work; just as if it was I that was to do them a kindness. But the thing that touched me most of all was this. They had some tickets for the next 'Saturday Popular,' and Silvia—that's the second—was going, but the others could neither of them go with her; they were invited somewhere, I think. So Mrs. Cash—not one of the girls—asked me if I would go. I did feel honoured, I can tell you. I felt like the man in 'Les Misérables' when the bishop gives him the candlesticks. And, on the Saturday, we went. You must have lived in the way that I had, for six months, to know how I felt. It was like an exaltation in my own eyes to walk down Regent Street with a girl like that, and to sit there with her in the concert-

room, and see her smile when I spoke to her. There's something about all those girls that I never saw so fully in any others; they are so genuine and kindly, so simple and yet so clever."

Orlando thought how Elizabeth's womanly instinct had detected their virtues at first sight.

"And I had never heard such music, either. It was all like a new world. Well, that was the beginning, and since that, I have been there often, and they are the best friends I have. I am painting Silvia's portrait, now that my Academy work is done."

"She seems to be your favourite."

"Oh no; it is not because of that. I rather think I like Julia best. It is because she is to be married some time next year. She is engaged to a sailor, and they will like to have her portrait. I don't deny," he added, smiling, "that she is the

prettiest of the three, and that that, perhaps, may have made a difference."

"I call such a woman as that an angel, in the old, original meaning of the word," Orlando remarked.

"So she is," said Duncannon. "Should you like to know her?"

He put the question with a magpie-like, upturned eye.

"Indeed I should."

"They are women's rights reformers; Mrs. Cash lectures," Duncannon proceeded, in an easy voice.

"Oh-h!" said Orlando; and his face decidedly fell.

Duncannon laughed, shortly.

There was an interval, short in actual time, but long in its sense of division.

"You disapprove of that kind of thing?" said Duncannon.

"I must say I do," Orlando answered, apologetically. "It seems to me so—so unwomanly."

Duncannon sprang up, and stood kicking one heel against his chair; a spot of red had risen on each of his cheek-bones. "There, that's it!" he said, with his abrupt laugh. "Unwomanly! Who is to do it for them, if they don't? No man will."

Orlando said nothing, but it is perhaps needless to remark that his views were not materially altered by these rather interjectional observations. He asked himself what would be the attitude of Elizabeth towards such a question, and was confirmed in his opinion that it was decidedly unwomanly for a woman to lecture.

"Why, she might as well preach," he said.

"Well, and *I* don't see why she shouldn't, if she has talent enough; it wasn't given her for nothing, I suppose."

To this Orlando had no answer. The opposition of sentiment to argument is unsatisfactory, and leads to loss of temper

on both sides. Duncannon, too, felt that it was better not to push the discussion further.

"You don't know many working women, I suspect," he said, as if seeking excuses to himself for Orlando's prejudices. "And I dare say you never read Clough's 'Bothie of Tober-na-Vuolich.'"

"Oh, but I have, though. I am bound to say I don't quite see how it applies."

Duncannon laughed, a good, sunny laugh this time, that was allowed to run out to completeness, and quoted, merrily—

> "'Ah, you have much to learn; we can't know all things at twenty.'"

More soberly, he went on, "You do know Clough, then?"

"I have read the poems; I can't say I know them well."

"What do you think of them?"

"It is a difficult question to answer in that 'stand-and-deliver' sort of way. To

tell the truth, they rather annoyed me. They were like the writing of a man who isn't master of his trade—just as college verses are; as if a sculptor should chip out his marble with a spade."

"Stop. That's a couplet. Not a bad one.

> He isn't master of his trade;
> He hacks his marble with a spade.

Perhaps that is rather true of the form. You see, I don't read much poetry myself, and I am not so sensitive to that. And yet, Sherborne, think of the songs, how musical they are—

> 'How smooth we glide, how softly! Ah!
> Were life but like the gondola!'

And, then, those songs of the ship."

"Yes, it is true; but would they have been so smooth if Clough had not read Tennyson?"

"Would you and I have been what we are, if we had been born last century?

Upon my word, I think you might; you remind me a little of Sir Charles Grandison."

"Allow me to point out one difference, at least. Sir Charles Grandison always had the most of the conversation, and the best of the argument."

"Ah, yes! He didn't know me," the irrepressible Duncannon returned. "But don't you really like Clough? Putting aside the form, don't you think the thoughts are fine? Don't you think they express just the thoughts of the age—what every one must have felt, at some time or another?"

"Honestly, I can't say that I do. *Is* there that dissatisfaction, that constant self-inquiry to know what it is one really wants? I don't find it."

"Lucky you, that's all," Duncannon interjected.

"And then when he talks of love; why,

his men are never quite sure whether they are in love with one woman, or another, or either of the two. That is not natural."

"I don't know," said Duncannon, slowly and impersonally.

Quick came Orlando's counter-blow. "Well, I do."

The colour rose in his face as quickly. He said no more. Neither did Duncannon, but presently repeated, gently, caressingly—

> "'He has a life small happiness that gives
> Who, friendless, in a London lodging lives,
> Dines in a dingy chop-house, and returns
> To a lone room; while all within him yearns
> For sympathy, and his whole nature burns
> With a fierce thirst for some one—is there none?—
> To expend his human tenderness upon.
> So blank, and hard, and stony is the way
> To walk,—I wonder not men go astray.'

There, those are the lines I loved Clough for, first; and that is the state of things from which Mrs. Cash saved me, and so I stick up for both of them. And if you

will read your Clough diligently, and come with me to call in Gower Street, you will go some way to learning a little of the much you have to learn. And if you won't, why you'll have it to pray for among your negligences and ignorances, that's all. You may laugh, but I'm in earnest."

"I did not laugh; and I will go with you to call on Mrs. Cash whenever you please—if I may."

CHAPTER XI.

IN GOWER STREET.

"They found Lucretia spinning, with all her maidens about her."

ORLANDO found himself standing with Duncannon, an afternoon or two later, upon the doorstep of Mrs. Cash's house, in Gower Street. The door was opened, and their ears were at once saluted by a peal of girlish laughter from some upper part of the house. The room into which they were shown looked with two windows on the street, and had by nature a rather gloomy appearance. The character of the inhabitants had, however, gone far to modify that of the room. A piano stood open

with music on it, and the pretty Silvia was busy at the dining-table, putting out wild-flowers from a large heap before her, into vases, and into soup-plates filled with sand. The delicate perfume of the many primroses met them as they came in. Mrs. Cash was sitting near one of the windows, taking notes from a book, open on a reading-stand, by her. She rose, and came towards them with a kindly smile of welcome. Standing thus, face to face with her, Orlando was struck by the full, open-eyed and kindly gaze which she turned upon him. Her voice, also, was full and clear, and her words had no mincing utterance.

"I am glad to see you, Mr. Sherborne. We have heard of you so very often from Mr. Duncannon. This is my second daughter—Silvia."

Silvia bowed to both of them, and said, in a pretty, flute-like voice, "I won't offer

to shake hands with anybody; my fingers are all wet and sandy."

"What a heap of flowers!" said Duncannon, taking up an anemone or two from the pile.

"Cecily brought them from Highgate. She has just come home."

"I thought I heard her laugh, as we came in."

"Oh, that was at Viola's letter. Julia got one this morning."

"And how is Viola? Pretty lively, I suppose, from that."

"The youngest of my daughters is spending her holidays in the country," Mrs. Cash explained to Orlando.

While she was speaking, the other two sisters came in, looking very much alike, and Orlando was introduced to them. Julia had her little sister's open letter in her hand; Cecily's face was bright with amusement. Orlando observed a slight

difference between their manner of speech and that of the society to be met at Lady Ellen's. They spoke with something more of precision, and with a completer utterance, using more and deeper notes of voice.

The little Viola's letter was adorned with illustrations, which were handed round, and fully accounted for Cecily's laughter. They were little sketches, in pencil, of people and of animals, childishly executed enough, but showing a quick eye for character and a perception of the comic which could only have belonged to a child in a quick-witted home. Orlando was a good deal amazed at them, and thought that the household which could produce so precocious a little person must be a quaint one. His wonder was further increased by an extract or two from the letter, written in a self-possessed and connected style which appeared to him most unchildlike.

Cecily had taken a work-basket as she sat down, and busied herself upon some embroidery of a fashion new to Orlando, working upon dark-blue satin in pale-blue and white silks, not from a pattern, but from a black and white drawing of an antique medallion. Julia selected three or four flowers from Silvia's pile, and arranging them carefully in a slender little vase, took them to a side-table, and began to sketch their outline.

"Was it your first visit to the Academy the other day?" Mrs. Cash began.

"Yes; but I am afraid I didn't profit as much as I ought to have done. I found the people so much more interesting than the pictures."

"Then I suppose we must not ask what you thought of them, nor which you liked the best?"

"Oh, I know which I liked best; but that was on personal grounds; it was——"

"Now, don't," interrupted Duncannon, from the table where he was helping Silvia with her flowers—"*don't* tell us that you liked a picture because some one else did."

"No, I wasn't going to say that. It was that little Welsh thing of yours."

"You are not a fair critic of that," said Duncannon.

"Ah, you were with Mr. Duncannon when he painted it, were you not?" said Julia.

Cecily looked up with an amused little smile, and Orlando felt convinced that Duncannon had given an account of the painting, and of his own desolate condition on the hearthrug. He laid up the point for future inquiry.

"I think that—associations apart—Mr. Duncannon's portraits are better than his landscapes," said Mrs. Cash, looking kindly at the young painter as she spoke. He, on his part, turned round at once to listen

to her. "You have so marked a gift for likeness. I know very few portraits that catch the trick of expression better than those two of yours."

"That I could not judge of, you see, not knowing the originals," said Orlando.

"Oh, we have a photograph of one of them—Mrs. Lisle," said Silvia. "Would you mind passing that album, Mr. Duncannon? I don't like to touch it."

The album was handed, and Cecily showed the portrait. From that, Orlando turned to the others in the book. The large proportion represented women or girls. To most of them Cecily added some little explanatory comment, and many of these were rather surprising to Orlando —as, for instance, "She writes leading articles for one of the newspapers, and the same paper cries out against female suffrage and the influence of women in politics;" or, "She is a student of the Academy;"

"That is a lady whom Julia met at the British Museum;" "That is Miss Owen, who had Silvia's district before she took it—but she went to South Africa as a missionary."

Orlando glanced at Silvia amongst her flowers, and thought that she was the sweetest sister of the three. She was just gathering up her last blossoms, and Duncannon had gone to look over and counsel Julia.

"Mamma," said Silvia, "I think I will just go down and take some of these to Jimmy Williams while they are fresh. A few flowers are a perfect blessing there."

"Very well, my dear, do. And ask Anne to stand that plateful in a cool place, that they may go into the hospital, to-morrow morning."

Silvia bore away the plate and the bunch of flowers, Duncannon flying to open the door for her.

"And that's my little sister," said Cecily, as Orlando reached the first page of the album.

He looked with some curiosity at the photograph. It showed a serious little girl, who looked out with a fixed gaze at the spectator.

"It is not very good," said Mrs. Cash, glancing at the book and smiling.

The likeness might be unsatisfactory, but the memory it recalled was evidently sweet. Duncannon also, whose bad habit it was to roam the room with his hands in his pockets, instead of sitting still in an unobtrusive manner, approached, and looked over Orlando's shoulder.

"No, it doesn't do her justice a bit. No photographs ever do, to a face that's worth painting. They give an intelligent person the stolid expression of dumb attendants on the stage."

"Oh, that reminds me," said Julia.

"We want some of your assistance, please. The Millers are going to get up some *tableaux vivants*. Can you give us an idea for a subject? They thought of Cinderella, but I am sure none of our feet are small enough; and it is not very original. We have made up our minds to Macbeth and the witches. That is very easily and effectively done: a deep pan, with a saucer of burning spirit and salt (you can't imagine the ghastly effect that gives), and sheets and table-cloths for drapery."

"That might be worth sketching."

"Oh, you shall sketch us as much as you will, if you will only help us to something new and striking. I think I can promise that."

"And are you going to be a witch?"

"*I?* No, indeed; I am only general aid and manager. Fancy my pupils inviting me to act a witch, with my hair down, and my shoes and stockings off!"

"Oh, I didn't know. I thought it might be part of the newer and more liberal system of education. I met you once, remember, riding on a donkey, in company with your pupils, on Hampstead Heath."

There was a general laugh, in which Julia took her full share.

Cecily asked Orlando whether he could help Julia with a suggestion. Duncannon, however, anxious to make his peace, began, "Did you ever see a picture called, I think, 'The Game of Life,'—a man playing at chess with an evil spirit for his soul, while an angel hangs over him on the other side?"

"No."

"The greatest light falls on the angel, white; the greatest dark on the evil spirit, black, hooded—only a claw-like hand stretched out to move a piece. The man is in a half-light; the whole com-

position oval, the angel being the highest point. The difficulty would be in sending a stream of light on her. A lantern would do it."

"Willie Miller has a bull's-eye lantern for his moth-hunting."

"The very thing."

"Silvia must be the angel. You must show us the exact positions when she comes in."

"But she may be gone a long time, perhaps."

"Oh no; she won't stay, because it is not her day. And it is not far off; it is just this side of the Seven Dials."

"Seven Dials!" exclaimed Orlando, involuntarily, and with all the exaggerated horror of a countryman's ignorance of London. "Surely Miss Cash is not gone *there* alone?"

"Oh yes. It is her district," said Cecily.

And Mrs. Cash added, "Silvia is as safe among the people there as she is in this room—except, indeed, from the chance of fever, and that, companionship could not save her from."

Yet Orlando could not be quite easy until he saw Silvia come in.

She looked a little pale, and sat down without speaking.

"Well, dear?" said her mother.

"I am glad I went. Poor little fellow! I don't think he will be alive for any, next time Cecily brings them."

"So bad as that?" said Julia.

Silvia nodded. "One can't be sorry. The poor child's life is one suffering. But it seems 'a piece of childhood thrown away.'"

As she sat, looking before her with a wistful sadness in her tender, blue eyes, Orlando understood why Julia had said at once, "Silvia must be the angel."

"And are you coming to me, in Newman Street, to-morrow?" Duncannon asked her. He, like the rest of the world, had a softer tone in his voice for Silvia.

"Oh yes, please. After next week, my holidays will be over, and I shall only have Saturday mornings free. I had better come as often now as you can have me."

"And the three attendant Graces," said Duncannon, with a comprehensive bow, "will bring their book, and read."

"I hope you appreciate the implied compliment, Silvia," said Mrs. Cash. "I may, perhaps, be obliged to break off a little sooner if I don't get time to prepare my notes for Monday, but I dare say some one will go on reading in my place."

"Very well, then, to-morrow," said Duncannon; and Orlando, feeling that he had already somewhat prolonged his visit

in his desire to see Silvia safely return, now rose to take his leave.

"Well?" said Duncannon, inquiringly, as they passed into Great Russell Street.

"Well, if those are women's rights reformers, they don't seem so very terrible."

"Silvia, for instance," said Duncannon. "Don't you think her a little 'unwomanly'?"

"How pretty she is!" said Orlando. "But has she always that little melancholy air?"

"Generally. I fancy she thinks upon 'the perils of the seas.'"

"I should like to see your portrait of her."

"Oh, it is on view in Newman Street daily, until dusk. Admission free."

"By-the-by, what is your number in Newman Street?" asked Orlando.

Duncannon told him, and then, standing

still, added, "I have to call here about a frame, so good-bye for the present."

They parted, and Orlando walked homeward, considering whether it would be permissible to go this afternoon and try songs to Elizabeth's accompaniment.

CHAPTER XII.

IN A STUDIO.

"——books, we know,
Are a substantial world both pure and good:
Round these, with tendrils strong as flesh and blood,
Our pastime and our happiness will grow.
There find I personal themes, a plenteous store:
Matter wherein right voluble I am:
To which I listen with a ready ear."

A DAY or two later, Orlando fulfilled his intention of visiting Duncannon's studio. He was admitted to a large, light room, where he found not only the artist, but also Mrs. Cash and her three daughters. Silvia was seated in a high chair, placed on a slightly raised platform. Behind her was a screen of dingy baize, making a background from which her fair hair and delicately tinted profile stood out like a fine cameo.

On an easel, planted at the other end of the room, stood the unfinished portrait, ghastly in its pale resemblance. Mrs. Cash, Julia, and Cecily were sitting together on one side. The two girls occupied a wide, carved oak bench, Mrs. Cash a common Windsor chair of red-stained deal. She had a book in her hands, from which, as he came in, he heard her reading, in a measured beat of verse.

"Ah, Sherborne," said Duncannon, looking up; "come in."

"Oh, but I am disturbing you," said Orlando. "I thought I should find you alone."

"Not at all," Duncannon answered—in reference, it must be supposed, to the first clause; "we shall come to a rest in a few minutes. Sit down."

Orlando looked round him dubiously, and finding no chair, took his place on the edge of the platform, almost at Mrs. Cash's feet.

"You were reading," said he; "don't let me interrupt you. I am so sorry to have disturbed you."

Mrs. Cash seemed at first indisposed to continue, but seeing his entreaties to be earnest, yielded. She was reading 'The Spanish Gypsy,' and had reached the point of Don Silva's hurried ride homeward to find his betrothed gone. She read well, with a liquid flow of rhythm and a delicate fulness of expression, that yet never strove to go beyond the province of recital into that of the stage. There was no other sound except the soft touch of Duncannon's brush upon canvas or palette, and the clink of his colour-tubes when they touched the paint-box or one another. Once or twice Cecily, bending to Julia's ear, whispered a comment, as, for instance, at the description of the priest who rode

> 'Firm in his saddle, stalwart and broad-backed,
> Crisp-curled, and comfortably secular;'

when it was evident that she suggested a modern representative. The tale went on. The picture rose before them of the hall, with its many and motley tenants.

"Good to paint," murmured Duncannon.

At the close of that scene, Mrs. Cash paused, and Silvia came down from her pedestal, to inspect her own likeness and her sisters' work.

"I should like to see Spain," sighed Duncannon, whose desire for travel was easily aroused.

"How about the Spanish cookery?" asked Cecily.

"Oh, I am not so particular, Miss Cecily, as you. I should go in the time of fruit, and trouble myself for little else than bread and wine. It is not good policy to accept ill-cooked dinners from one's landlady in London, but abroad, the case is different. If you go

'Leaving home and ease,
A stubborn will to please,'

you must be content to please the stubborn will and nothing else."

Orlando stood looking at the gradually growing portrait.

"What do you think?" asked Duncannon, turning to him.

"I am not artist enough to know. I can see the likeness, of course; but I don't know whether the parts that seem wrong are really faults or only incompletenesses."

"'O wise young judge,'" said Duncannon, laying a hand on his shoulder. "I do perceive in you the germs of a good critic; that is to say, of a critic who knows the limits of his own knowledge. To you I will show other things, finished and unfinished, and pay attention to what you say of them."

"Is not that rather a punishment for speaking the truth, Mr. Duncannon?" said Julia, who also had drawn near.

Duncannon looked up quickly, to catch her smile, and made no other answer.

"May I stay and hear some more?" asked Orlando, fancying that they were waiting to continue the sitting, in expectation that he would go.

"May he, Mrs. Cash?" asked Duncannon.

"With very much pleasure, as far as I am concerned," Mrs. Cash answered, giving to Orlando that sincere, kindly smile which made everyday words from her full of reality.

Orlando sat, and listened, with increasing interest, to the love-sorrows of the duke. Julia, who had something of the artist's observant eye, noted the gradually deepening intensity of his face, as he became more and more self-forgetful. All were sorry when the second book of the poem was finished, and the sitting came to an

end. Orlando was surprised to find how late it was.

"You will come, next time, and hear the rest, won't you?" said Julia.

Orlando only awaited confirmation of the invitation to give a glad acceptance. Julia and Cecily rolled together their work, Silvia resumed her hat and mantle, and mother and daughters took their departure, while Orlando lingered for another half-hour looking over Duncannon's sketches.

On arriving at home, he found Gilbert waiting for him with a proposal to row up the river. They went, accordingly, and Orlando was by no means too love-sick to enjoy the perfect afternoon, the delicious motion, and the invigorating sense of power, as the boat swung forward to his strokes. They dined at Richmond, and pulled back, under a darkening sky, to Putney. The tide was against them, but the struggle was an extra enjoyment. Both were

good oarsmen: Gilbert had, in his day, rowed in a winning eight; and a boat upon the Sherril was among Orlando's earliest and most continuous memories. They landed at Putney, far advanced in friendship, and resolving to repeat the excursion.

That chance which, after neglecting the introduction through all our previous years, is hasty in presenting to us for the second time a new acquaintance in the world of words or thoughts, is sometimes equally busy in regard to our human acquaintances. Thus Orlando, going within the same week to a dance at the house of a college friend, met Julia and Silvia Cash. His first impression was of incongruity. It seemed strange to him that these work-devoted young women should be at a dance. Yet they did not, as far as he could judge, seem at all out of their element, but appeared to enjoy their evening very fully indeed. He

danced with both of them—with Silvia twice—and found them unusually pleasant partners, simple and cheerful, and ready with bright talk. He observed that others seemed to share his opinion of them, for they were seldom sitting out. More than once he was reminded of Elizabeth's summing up: "They look so nice, and seem so quiet and interested."

Of Elizabeth herself he saw very little during these few days. Once, however, he met her in Rotten Row. She was pale, and he thought looked anxious and troubled. She was among a group of acquaintances, of whom O'Brien was one. She turned from him to Orlando, with a look of escape on her face, and for some few yards they walked side by side. She had shaken hands with him in silence, and as she walked she said not a word. He respected her silence, and felt it a mark of confidence for which to be grateful. At

parting, she gave him her hand, and said, in an undertone, and with a quick smile that failed to mount as high as to her eyes, "If you knew how thankful I am to you for ten minutes of peace!"

Orlando reflected a good deal upon that utterance, and came to the conclusion that O'Brien was the cause of her trouble.

This remembrance was in his mind when, a few days later, he sat listening in the studio, while Mrs. Cash read the closing scenes of 'The Spanish Gypsy;' and it served rather to intensify than to weaken his interest in the tale. His original shade of mistrust towards Mrs. Cash had, by this time, quite faded away. He would have been as prompt as Duncannon himself to repudiate the application of the name unwomanly to any proceeding of hers, and it was his full intention to attend the next lecture that she should deliver. The growing passion and sadness of the story,

losing nothing in the interpretation, went home, with fullest accord, to Orlando's heart. Like Claude Melnotte, he desired, just now, to read no books that were not tales of love. When Mrs. Cash's voice ceased, leaving in his ears, during the few minutes of rest, Fedalma's words—

> 'The bonds Fedalma may not break for you
> I cannot joy that you should break for her;'

and of Silva's—

> 'This seems a valley in some strange, new world
> Where we have found each other, my Fedalma;'

the scene continued before him: he saw the wide southern plain, the falling darkness, the forms of the two lovers. But Fedalma was Elizabeth. Just so would Fedalma have spoken and have acted; of that he felt sure.

And now arose a debate as to Fedalma's conduct.

"Did she do right, do you think?" said Cecily. "Ought she to have sacrificed her lover to her father? What do you

say, Silvia? Would you have given up Charlie?"

Silvia slightly blushed, and shook her head. "I don't think she did right," said Silvia, breathing softly on that reed instrument, her voice. "It is not what the Bible says, is it—the leaving of father and mother for *that?*"

She looked across to her mother, and look and tone made the words express, not the abridgment of love to father and mother, but the exaltation of that other love which was still greater.

Julia took up the question.

"I rather agree with the young man in the French play that Willie Miller is doing for his examination. The girl says, when her father wants her to give up her lover because he is poor, and to marry a rich man instead—

'Un père a des droits;'

and he answers—

'Et n'ai-je pas les miens?'

I think Fedalma's duties were quite as strong towards Don Silva as towards Zarca. I must say I don't sympathize very much with Zarca."

"Common sense is the best guide in those matters," began Duncannon, slowly; and then, seeing Mrs. Cash's eyes fixed upon him in considerable astonishment, corrected himself. "I don't mean exactly that. What I mean is rather this: the really right way, in justice to everybody concerned, is generally the common-sense way as well. There's a sort of instinct to take the way that is the most unpleasant—and showy—without any consideration that other people are involved too."

"As Max says to Thekla, in 'Wallenstein;' only I can't recollect the words," said Cecily.

"But where would the story have been if Fedalma had stayed?" said her mother, smiling. "I suspect one might parody

Bacon's words, and say of such problems, as he says of love altogether, that they have a larger part in plays and stories than in real life."

"Do you think that is true, in Bacon?" asked Orlando, looking suddenly up.

Mrs. Cash deliberated a moment, and replied, "Yes, I do think so. And so will you, Mr. Sherborne, when you are as old as I am; that is, if your life is at all after the ordinary pattern."

"Oh, but it won't be," said Duncannon. "He is fated beforehand. Have you not observed his likeness to Sir Charles Grandison?"

"I should consider that high praise, Mr. Sherborne, if I were you. It would be a great improvement if more modern young men were a little like him."

"Length of speech and all?" asked Duncannon.

"Yes, Mr. Duncannon; length of speech

and all, if the politeness were to come with it. I don't admire the saving of words, when a young man says to me at supper, 'Chicken?' 'Tongue?' I would much rather wait the extra minute while he took time to say, 'May I give you?' And now let me leave off preaching, and go on with George Eliot." This with a smile that took out any sting from her strictures.

As the full tragedy worked itself out, her listeners became more and more attentive. The hope of some loophole of escape, the desire, so unwillingly abandoned, even at the last page, of some happy final compromise, lent them its delusive light. But, page by page, it dwindled until all was over. Mrs. Cash softly closed the book, found Orlando's eyes fixed upon her with a steady, far-away gaze. The story had waked in him a new feeling of possible loss and division

coming between Elizabeth and himself—a new haste to make all sure. To-day or to-morrow he would see her. Why linger any more?

Cecily, in a voice that had a trembling pulse in it, said, "Oh, but I think she did do right, after all."

Orlando started, and was recalled to a knowledge of where he was.

"What shall we read, next time?" said Duncannon.

"And when will next time be?" said Julia. "Silvie is going to Tottenham until Monday, and after that, she will have her lessons again."

"I suppose, then, Saturday week. Shall we see you, Sherborne, or is your interest at an end with the story?"

"I think I must look out for some fancy work; I feel so idle—a perfect drone in the hive."

"Oh, I'll give you a canvas to prepare

in coats of grey. Why didn't you mention it before? I have been wanting to try a new plan that Allan told me of, but haven't had time to prepare my canvas."

"I shall be delighted to assist, however humbly, in the service of art."

Duncannon called him 'Sir Charles Grandison,' and Julia reproved Duncannon for ingratitude.

"Then I'll say good-bye for the present, Mr. Sherborne," said Mrs. Cash. "But I hope you won't feel that that present need extend as far as to Saturday week."

"Thank you," said Orlando, with a grateful smile.

They shook hands and parted "for the present," as she had said, little dreaming how long an interval the words were to cover.

CHAPTER XIII.

IN THE BOTANICAL GARDENS.

"'O lassie, I maun love thee.'
'O laddie, love na me.'
'O lassie, I maun love thee.'
'O laddie, love na me.
Love them wha has their hearts at home:
Mine's lang been far frae me.'"

Calling, on the morrow, in Burlington Street, Orlando was informed that Major Glendinning had gone into the country, and that Miss Glendinning was staying with Lady Ellen Darling. Upon this he discovered that it certainly was his duty to visit Lady Ellen, and proceeded at once to Portland Place. A carriage was waiting before the door. On going in, he found Elizabeth, her aunt, and Miss Tenby, just

prepared to go out, and began to think that fortune had deserted his cause.

"We were going to the Botanical Gardens," said Lady Ellen. "Miss Tenby has never seen them, and my brother-in-law, who is a Fellow, can give us admission on any of the off-days. Of course you have seen the gardens, Mr. Sherborne?"

"No, never."

"Oh, then, perhaps you would be inclined to come with us? Our tickets admit a fourth."

The invitation was joyfully accepted, and the carriage proceeded on its way with four occupants instead of three.

The Botanical Gardens, in their tranquillity, present an aspect very different from that by which they are more widely known. Instead of serving merely as a stage and scenery for a show of flowers and fashions, they were now a sleepy haunt of solitude and greenness. The main

walks had a peculiar character of their own, from being bordered by long lines of wooden posts and bars, the skeleton framework of absent awnings. The party went to the great glass-houses, looked at a collection of hideously grotesque little cactuses, whose names were as thorny as themselves, and endured for a few moments the damp heat in which flourished bananas, palms, and other tropical wonders of surprising shape and size. Then, coming out into the cooler air (at which Miss Tenby shivered and coughed), they went to look at a little unbeautiful patch of ground, which was a botanical garden in very truth. For here, divided into tiny beds, and each bed supplied with earth of a suitable sort, grew, languidly, the various families of English wild-flowers. Here were stone-crops blooming more successfully than the most, in a neat little crescent of broken brickbats, sparsely sprinkled with

dust. Here were carefully encouraged duckweeds, looking perversely inferior to those that float, uninvited, on farm-ponds; and grasses that looked far more weedy and seedy than those of an ordinary hayfield. In this part of the garden were congregated little knots of youths, who appeared to be students. They carried books with bits of paper hanging out of them, and wrote ardently in note-books. They also shouted to one another from distant corners, and carried their chairs from point to point in a very restless manner. In prettier, but less scientific nooks, they had seen scattered artists, male and female, sketching. A few nursemaids with children were also visible, and in the glass-houses, they had seen two Sisters of Charity.

Leaving the field-flowers, they came to the lake, with its swans, its mock-rustic bridges, and shady walks.

Elizabeth, all this time, had been un-

usually silent. She looked pale, and Orlando, mindful of her thanks for having been left in peace, scarcely addressed her. His heart sank as he thought that he should have no opportunity, to-day, of private speech with her. Miss Tenby, unobservant, and quite happy in being under her dear Lady Ellen's wing, chattered on, making little, unoriginal observations at every fresh object, and constantly calling upon Elizabeth to look at this or that.

Lady Ellen was a little tired. They sat down on one of the seats by the water.

"There is a very fine view from the tower," said she to Orlando. "On a clear day you can see all London. I don't feel inclined to go up; but, if you young people would like to see it, I will sit here and wait for you."

"Oh, I would rather wait, too," said Miss Tenby; "I would, indeed. I don't

like going up so many stairs; it takes away one's breath so. I would rather stay with you, Lady Ellen."

Orlando looked at Elizabeth. The sudden delight in his face might have warned her to remain, but she was too much preoccupied to notice it. She rejoiced in the thought of a few minutes of comparative solitude. Orlando, she felt sure, would not persecute her with small chatter when she longed to be quiet.

They ascended. At the top was a little square platform with a low, embattled wall, a flagstaff, an anemometer, and a few chairs. Below them lay, indeed, all London, wrapped in a pale-blue veil of smoke. They looked southward, standing side by side for a time without speaking.

"What a relief to get up so high!" said Elizabeth. She spoke with a sigh, looking out over the wall, unsuspicious of any emotion on her companion's part.

"I wish I might stand so for ever—with you," said Orlando, speaking as she had spoken, in a rather lowered voice, but with all his story vibrating in it.

Elizabeth's face changed suddenly from the white rose to the red. She turned upon him with startled and alarmed inquiry in her looks. The decision was shown beforehand — the question and answer given and received in that moment. Orlando knew it, and refused to know it.

"Ah! I do wish it. To be with you has been my one wish since the day you passed me first in Shrubb's Wood. You didn't remember."

"Oh, that day—that day!" said Elizabeth, almost with a cry. "Don't—don't! you mustn't go on. It is no use. Oh, I am so sorry!" She paused, quite pale again. "And I was engaged, then, that day, before you ever saw me."

He fell back a step, unsteadily.

"To your cousin?"

"No—oh no. To Captain Grove."

There was a moment's interval. She moved a little towards him, her face full of the tenderest pity.

"Oh, but I am so sorry! I never thought of this. If I had only guessed!" Tears were in her eyes.

"Don't!" said Orlando. "I suppose it can't be helped."

He broke off, and, turning away, leaned on the wall. In this first shock, it seemed to him as if he had got his death-wound.

For a little there was complete silence. Then the strokes of the hour from a church clock at the bottom of Albany Street came floating up on the cool wind. Both were warned that their time here must be short, and that all was not yet said.

Orlando turned. The change in his face smote her with bitter self-reproach.

It was not merely pale; a kind of haggardness, a look of utter desolation and defeat, had come upon it. But, through the wretchedness, he managed to call up a smile as he said—

"*You* will never have to suffer this, at least. It was my own stupidity. I never thought it possible that you could care for any one else. It never came into my mind."

Elizabeth understood now the game of cross-purposes in which she had blindly taken part. It had been all her fault. Why had she not insisted upon having her engagement made known?

"I am afraid that I have been doing very wrong," said she. "Was it my behaviour (but it must have been) that made you think——"

Orlando could not bear the ashamed and sorrowful tone of self-accusation.

"No, no; it was my fault—my horrible

presumption. I never would have troubled you, if I had only guessed. It was all my own blindness."

"No, not all." (How the light leaped into his face!) "For I did, and I do, like you very, very much. I feel honoured that you should care for me. But I blame myself—oh, I blame myself! But, indeed, I thought you understood that it was for Gilbert's sake that I was so particularly friendly towards you."

"For Gilbert's sake?"

"Yes. Did you really never guess? I ought not, perhaps, to tell you his secret, but now I must. I thought you knew he cared for Millie."

"Millie!"

The shock was so great and so sudden, that, for a moment, he could say no more.

Then, "And Millie? Does she know? Do you think she cares?"

"I don't know; I can't tell."

"Millie," repeated Orlando, slowly and softly, looking before him at the sandy stones of the floor. And in an instant had risen up before him the happiness of Millie and Gilbert, and his own long, lonely life. He lifted his eyes and looked at Miss Glendinning silently, taking a long, mute farewell. Then, seeing the sadness of her face, he added, in the same low voice, all the more pathetic for being held in restraint, "You mustn't be unhappy because of me. I shall bear it somehow."

"But it would have been better for you if you had never seen me," said she, in a voice full of pain.

"No, no; I shall never think so. If I have suffered, it has been my own fault. I hope you may be very happy."

"Thank you," said Elizabeth. The fruitless pain at her heart checked her with a kind of sob. "No one shall ever know of this from me—no one."

Below them came a sound of steps and voices.

"They have come to look for us," said Orlando.

They went down, and met Lady Ellen and Miss Tenby at the foot of the tower. They had been away from them not quite ten minutes.

"Could you see the view well?" asked Lady Ellen, cheerfully.

"Yes; it was very fine," Elizabeth answered. "But I found it a little cold;" and she shivered.

"Cold, my dear, this warm afternoon! You must have caught cold, Lizzie. You have not looked well for the last day or two, and now you are as pale as possible."

She looked at her niece with a keen-eyed anxiety, that brought the red colour in a flood to Elizabeth's cheeks.

"And now you are quite flushed. It must be a feverish cold. Perhaps you

would rather go home. And we have seen nearly all there is to see."

They turned towards the gates. As they went they caught a glimpse of the lake and its two swans. Orlando's mind went back to the lake at Sellingham, and to that day whose happiness showed now with so bitter an irony. He walked on, silent; he would have been glad to speak, but knew that his voice would betray him.

"You look tired, Mr. Sherborne, too," said Lady Ellen. "You and Gilbert did too much, yesterday. Gilbert forgets that every one is not as inexhaustible as himself."

At another time Orlando would probably have been eager to repudiate such a suggestion; to-day he was glad to accept it.

And Miss Tenby added, "The heat of those glass-houses was very tiring, you know."

The short drive to Portland Place was

uncomfortable enough. Orlando and Elizabeth sat side by side, conscious of their own and each other's emotion, and of the kindly anxious, but too keen eyes of Lady Ellen.

Orlando declined to come in with them. He took his farewell at the door—of the other two, and then of Elizabeth. As their hands met, their eyes met too. He turned away, carrying with him the memory of her sad face and deeply pitiful eyes.

CHAPTER XIV.

"IN LOVE-LONGING."

"The melancholy days are come, the saddest of the year."
W. C. Bryant.

ORLANDO turned away, feeling half stunned. He turned again up Portland Place. He could not go home; the restlessness of heart could be appeased, if by anything, only by wandering. He crossed Euston Road and went along the line of terraces on the east border of Regent's Park. He went in and out of their labyrinthine windings, avoiding the main road when he could. Even here, there were few people, but the sight of any hurt him. The

terraces which stood more backward were almost completely empty. There would be a short line of houses, then a flight of steps or a slope: in front, narrow strips of garden; behind, stables and carriage-yards. He leaned upon a balustraded wall, looking down into one of these gardens. Two little girls came out from among the bushes; they had been playing ball, and the ball had flown into the thick undergrowth. They flung it again; their shrill laughter came up to Orlando. He turned away and wandered on. Among these turnings he came at last to one which differed from the rest—an open gravelled space, houses standing round, a sun-dial, a monastic stillness, a little, quaintly built church. The door was partly open, and from within sounded the notes of an organ. The music soothed like the touch of an anodyne. He crept in. The church was small, old,

and dark. It looked like a minor chapel of some great cathedral. There was a mingled suggestion of the Westminster chapter-house and Henry VII.'s chapel. Its old, painted windows and dark, carved work recalled a thought of Sherborne. Rags of banners still hung about the walls; below were carved stalls, each with an emblazoned shield above. No one was to be seen. Orlando sat down in a corner, leaned his face on his hands, and let his spirit float upon the sounds. The vibration of the long organ notes ran through him as he sat. A soft, dreamy, summer-rivulet of sound flowed and rippled from wall to wall. Below throbbed a deeper melody. Orlando felt it like a human sympathy, sweet as the relief of tears. He sat, tasting comfort among his grief, until the last wave of sound throbbed upward, rose in a shower of drops, and, sinking, died into silence drop by drop. There

came a momentary break. The musician 'checked his hand and changed his note.' The slow beat of the 'Dead March in Saul' rose, lamenting. To Orlando, sensitive as he was to music, this was as the outcry of his own soul; his own griefs seemed the strings from which the melody was stirred. Each note was a pain, distinct as a physical thrill of touch.

"Oh, if I could only die!" he cried within himself.

And the march passed into a slow, weeping pulsation, sad as the voices in a battle-field by night. He longed to call aloud for silence—to rise and go away. Yet it seemed impossible to begone and leave behind, that wailing, crying to the empty walls. He sat motionless, making no sign or sound. The march gave way to a fugue of Bach's; a flight and a pursuit—a dragon-fly passing to and fro among the buzz of bees. But the quiver-

ing nerves, stung by music to acuter sensibility, were no longer to be soothed by music. The sounds were now but an outer trouble, which kept time to the trouble within.

They ceased, and silence was a glad relief. He sat, eased for the moment, in the entire stillness. There came a jingling of keys. The organist and a boy came down. Orlando was startled back into the world. He rose up, and passed out into the daylight again. And now where should he go? He did not know, and scarcely thought. Mechanically, he turned his steps southward. It was nearly two hours since he had parted from Elizabeth, at the door of her aunt's house. He passed along, between the park and the houses. The scanty number of people walking to and fro had increased; men and women were coming from their day's work, and lingered, drinking in the warm spring air.

The first beginning of twilight was thickening the air; the sky was faintly reddened in the west with the promise of a coming sunset; on the faces of the white houses the light lay bright and pink. At first it rested, too, on Orlando's face, recalling the colour of youth to its dark paleness. But presently, as if feeling the attempt but vain, it sank behind the trees of the park, and Orlando walked on with his face as little lightened as his heart.

He came down through the noisy crowds of Regent Street, feeling himself as solitary as a man in a foreign country, walking in the midst of a foreign tongue. He reached his lodging and went in. A letter was waiting for him—an invitation to a house at which he would be sure to meet Elizabeth. He wrote an answer, declining, on the ground that he would be leaving London. The invitation had but caused him to put into words a resolution which it now ap-

peared to him that he must have framed in the first moment. Yes, he must go—but whither? The thought of going home was scarcely less bitter than that of staying here.

For a moment, his mind turned towards Cambridge, but it quickly shrank away. No, he was known there. He could go nowhere where he was known, where he would have to meet familiar faces, and answer torturing inquiries. There seemed no place for him in the world.

A name floated up, a remembrance connected with failure and sadness, a place of disappointed hopes—Sherborne-by-the-Sea. He lifted his face. Yes, he would go there. Alone by the sea, in that blank place of desolation, he would face his trouble. Here, in this noisy world of unsympathetic goers and comers, its weight was crushing him to death. For Orlando was country born, and in his sorrow his heart turned

to the fields. To a true Londoner, their emptiness would have made his own pain the larger. And then came his dinner, accompanied by a message of apology for its condition, half-way between hot and cold, in consequence of having been kept waiting. His landlady was a good deal distressed, when it was sent down again, because he had neither eaten it nor complained, which was an illogical position. Nor did he light his gas, but sat alone in the dark, weighed down by such a misery as he could never know again, because no other pain would be the first. He had not been conscious that he had held his grief in restraint, hitherto; but as he sat alone, unseen in the stillness of his own room, he knew that the flood-gates were now for the first time fully opened.

And how long, how never-ending was the night that followed, with its every quarter of an hour beaten out remorselessly

from a neighbouring clock. For there is no medicine so infallible in producing wakefulness as a love trouble. At last, however, a merciful slumber of complete exhaustion, heavy and dreamless, fell upon him.

It was well on into the hours of daylight when he awoke. Lines of early sunlight edged the darkened window; sparrows were chirping outside, and the street was still. His eyes opened calmly; the peacefulness of sleep lingered through the first moments of awaking. Then came remembrance—the sick pain at heart, the recurring desire to get away, the longing by some means to kill thought. And then came upon him, mingled contradictorily with the terror of meeting any familiar face, a very hunger and thirst for human sympathy.

"If I had but a mother!" he thought.

But it may be doubted whether, if he had had a mother, the thought of her pain

and disappointment would not have effectually sealed his lips. For when, in our thoughts, we frame a wish of this kind, the imagined being whom we call up is made in precise accordance with that moment's need in ourselves, and the question of responding emotions on the other side does not present itself; whereas, in real life, one human being is not found to be thus merely and expressly adapted to the solace of another, and that which the child would share with its imaginary twin brother or sister, the orphan with its father or mother, comes, in daily experience, to be endured alone. Orlando's mind turned to the woman with whom of late the idea of motherhood had associated itself—Mrs. Cash. For the first time his troubled soul found something upon which it could rest. He resolved, not to tell his troubles to Mrs. Cash—no, indeed!—but to go and say good-

bye to her, since he was leaving London. It would do him good only to see her and hear her voice. She would forgive him, he was sure, for coming at an unconventionally early hour. With this resolve, he felt some slight easing of pain. Besides this, some slight preparation must be made if he meant to go into Suffolk; he would force his mind to occupy itself with these trivial details. But, after all, should he go? Of what avail would it be to go? And he murmured a Horatian allusion to black care.

The day was cruelly bright. He looked gloomily at the blue sky as he ate his breakfast. The servant, instructed to observe his demeanour, reported that his newspaper lay by him, unopened, and that she was sure he had no idea what he was eating. The landlady, out of a long experience of gentlemen-lodgers, opined that

it was money troubles. A blue, legal-looking letter, brought by the post a few minutes later, confirmed this suspicion. It could not, however, be added that Mr. Sherborne showed either emotion on its receipt or impatience to open it. It was, in fact, a curt note from his uncle, asking him to meet his Capton tenant that morning at Mr. Pelham's chambers, and discuss the renewal of a lease. Then he could not go to Mrs. Cash's this morning, nor to Sherborne-by-the-Sea to-day. But, at least, here was something to be done. He finished his breakfast with the better appetite, and started off, steadfastly resolved to betray no sign of emotion beneath the keen eyes of his uncle. But pallor and darkened eyes are traces not so easy to be suppressed of a sleepless and thought-tormented night. Mr. Pelham did not fail to tell him that he looked ill, and

to suggest in a dry tone, most irritating, but impossible to be resented, that he might be the better for returning home. Orlando would not make any answer which could indicate that such an opinion was gaining strength in his own mind, too. He gave all his energies of thought and attention to the business in hand. Mr. Pelham, recasting his former estimate of his nephew's character, began, with some surprise, to entertain the pleasing thought that he had inherited something of his own clear insight and quick grasp of detail. He smiled a wintry smile, recollecting that Orlando was his heir. It certainly was pleasanter to think of his accumulations passing to a man who showed promise of using them with intelligence and without meanness, "though, indeed," as he phrased it, even in his thoughts, "the terms are interchangeable." He looked at Orlando

with more solicitude, and trusted that he had not inherited, with other Pelham peculiarities, his mother's delicacy of health.

Orlando, when he left his uncle's, felt his spirits a little raised, but the bustle and roar of Fleet Street soon depressed them to their former level. He thought again of Mrs. Cash. Just now would be their early dinner-time. He could not possibly go now. Turning northward, he wandered in the unknown squares and streets of the dreary land between Holborn and Euston Road. Surely, not abject poverty itself is so depressing as the shabbiness of a gradually decaying district. Orlando came to the north end of Gower Street an hour later, paler, darker-eyed, more hopeless than ever. As he came in sight of the house, the door opened, and a little girl came running out. She carried a pile

of books in a strap. Her brown hair flew behind her, and her little hands were bare. Her face was that of Julia or Cecily, translated back into childhood and freshened by the roses of a country holiday. A smile came into her face as she ran, and she glanced up at Orlando, in passing, with the bright, unabashed gaze that belongs only to happy childhood. Her frank, childish face, so clear, so full of life and health, might have brought a smile to the lips of a misanthrope. But to Orlando, it brought a revulsion of soul. What place had he and his sorrows in the home of this blithe May-blossom? Viola's glance—for Viola, of course, it was—had called up again all his former shrinking from human observation. No, he could not face Mrs. Cash, with her clear eyes like that child's. No, he must go away. Nobody could help him; he must bear his grief alone. The first

impulse had been the truest; let him get away to Sherborne-by-the-Sea—it was the fittest place. A fear came upon him of meeting Duncannon. He turned quickly away, resolving to get away from London with as much speed as possible.

END OF VOL. I.

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